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THE  
MAHABHARATA

Being the Story of the Great Epic  
told in English

BY  
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in Longmans' Indian Classics.*

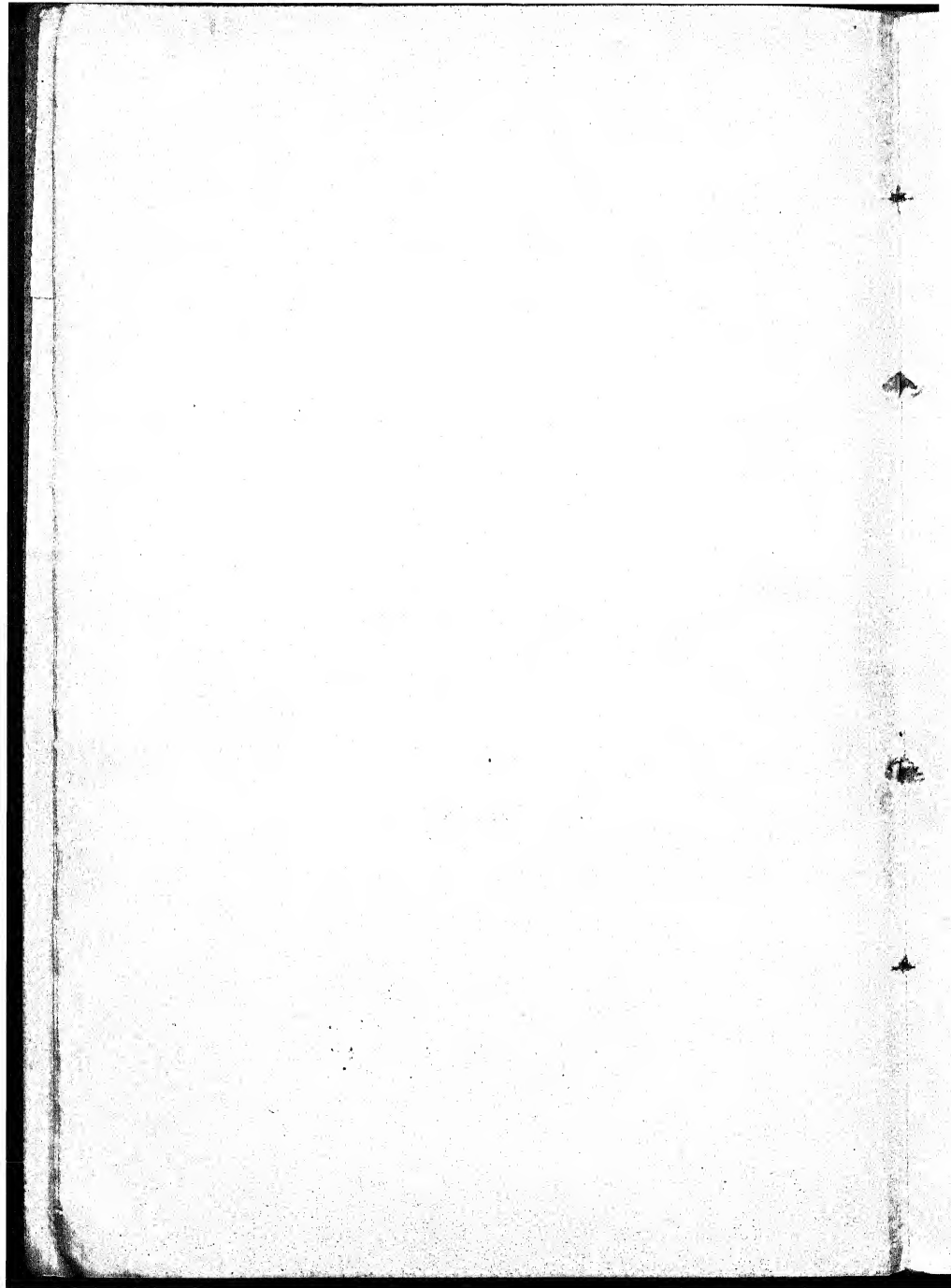
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## PREFACE

ENGLISH is a difficult language to learn. Even those European races whose own speech has much in common with it find its mastery a task which comparatively few of them are ever able perfectly to complete. For the Indian school-boy, whose mother-tongue is, in most cases, so completely unrelated philologically with English, the task of mastering the strange language with its extraordinary idioms, its arbitrary rules of spelling, its grammatical irregularities and its amazing peculiarities of pronunciation, must be always extremely difficult. It is to be feared that this difficulty is not often mitigated by the type of English books set as Readers for Indian schools. Too often these books, while excellent as far as matter and style are concerned, deal with purely English or Western subjects in which the interest of the pupils can be but artificial. In such a task as the Indian boys are set anything which helps to arrest their attention or to amuse them is of use as lightening their labours. One of the most important aids that can be offered to them is to furnish them with reading books of local interest, dealing with life in India. The boy who is taught English from a book which describes his own land and the scenes of daily life that he sees around him will pick up the language far quicker than the boy who tries to

learn it by reading of lands that he has never seen and of manners and customs so different from his own that the teacher has to explain the meaning of nearly every passage.

It is with this need in view—that the Indian school-boy should be taught English as far as possible from books dealing with Indian subjects—that the present volume is placed on the market. In the great epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, Hindu boys have a rich literature of their own. These famous poems are, however, in Sanskrit which to the modern Indian school-boy is very much what Latin and Greek have been for so many generations to English school-boys. Sanskrit is a classical and dead language, and few Indian boys to-day ever master it sufficiently to read the epics in the original. Portions of the great poems have been translated into the various vernaculars, and the main stories and the names and characters of the chief actors in the drama of the poems are known to every Hindu boy from his earliest years. Volumes for school use giving, in English prose or verse, selections from the epics have appeared from time to time and have deservedly won much popularity among Indians young and old. But, strangely enough, until now there seems to have been no effort to place before Indian school-boys and girls the complete story of the poems told in English. To meet this long-felt want this volume and the *Ramayana* uniform with it are published. In simple English it tells the story of the *Mahabharata*. Care has been

taken to adhere as closely as possible to the Sanskrit text and to tell the wonderful tale of the sufferings and triumph of the Pandava princes just as it is told in the original.

Probably few of the Indian teachers, certainly none of their pupils, know much about the origin, dates and development of the epics. There has therefore been added to each volume an introduction, more for the use of the teachers than of the boys, that the latter may be taught the history of the poem and thus be able to take an intelligent interest in the epic. With the aid of the introduction the teacher will be able to make the class more readily appreciate what they are reading, realize the epic's beauty as literature, the great moral lessons that the story teaches, and the conditions of life in the India of the Vedic period.

In conclusion the author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the late Babu Protap Chandra Roy's translation of the *Mahabharata* into English prose and to the late Mr. Talboys Wheeler's volume of translation and commentary.

The map at the beginning of this volume is reproduced by permission from Mr. Talboys Wheeler's 'History of India.'

## FOREWORD

THE Mahabharata is the longest poem in the world. Indeed there is no other poem even approaching it in length. It consists of 220,000 lines

The Mahabharata : and is divided into eighteen books.  
What it is. To it is added a supplement called

'Harivamsa', a history of Hari-Krishna, the God Vishnu. In its present form the Mahabharata is eight times as long as the two famous Greek epic poems, Homer's 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey' added together; and in comparison with it the Latin epic, Virgil's 'Aeneid' with its 9,868 lines, is a short poem. The next longest poem in the world is the sister Hindu epic, the Ramayana. That consists of 48,000 lines, and thus is not a fourth part of the Mahabharata in length. The title, from *maha*: great and *Bharata*: the name of an Indian king, with some word meaning 'history' or 'legend' understood, means 'The History of the Great House of Bharata'.

The main story of the epic, which relates the struggle for their ancestral territory between two rival branches of the royal house of Bharata, the Kauravas and Pandavas, the sons respectively of the two brothers Dhritarashtra and Pandu, occupies little more than a fifth of the poem. Thus the real epic or heroic legend is not much longer than the Ramayana. But the main story of the Bharata princes has been overlaid with legends, stories, episodes and philosophical discourses till it has been really buried under irrelevant matter. Most of this matter and many of the episodes are unconnected with the real story and could be taken

entirely away and yet leave the Mahabharata as complete epic poem. In fact, such removal would be a great literary improvement. Some of the episodes, however, and some of the discourses have been so closely interwoven with the poem that it would be impossible to tear them away without injuring the poem as a work of art.

The probable explanation of the vast length of the epic is that its composition extended over several centuries. Indian tradition attri-

*The Question of  
Authorship.*

butes the authorship to Vyasa, an ancient Hindu sage, who is said to have compiled the hymns of the four Vedas nearly five thousand years ago (3101 B.C.). But the word 'vyasa' means 'arranger' or 'compiler'; and, according to Hindu teaching, twenty-eight Vyasas, incarnations of Brahma and Vishnu, were born on the earth in successive ages to arrange the Vedas. Apart from the fact that no one man could have composed or written so immense a poem as the Mahabharata, there are in the epic itself evidences that it slowly grew into its present form through several centuries. 'Many of the legends,' writes Sir M. Monier Williams, 'are Vedic and of great antiquity; while others, again, are much more modern, probably interpolated during the first centuries of the Christian era. In fact, the whole work can be compared to a confused congeries of geological strata. The principal story, which occupies little more than a fifth of the whole, forms the lowest layer. But this has been so completely overlaid by successive incrustations and the mass so compacted together that the original substratum is not always traceable.'

Authorities agree that the original substratum is founded on real events in the history of the oldest

Aryan settlers in India. 'The central story of the Mahabharata,' writes Sir W. W. Hunter, 'narrates a pre-historic struggle between two families of the Lunar race for a patch of country near Delhi. The nucleus of the legend probably belongs to the period when the Aryan immigrants were settling in the upper part of the triangle of territory between the Ganges and the Jumna, and before they had made any considerable advances to the east of the latter river. It is not unreasonable to assign this period to about the twelfth century B.C. The remainder of the epic consists of later additions. Some of these are legends of the early Aryan settlements in the Middle-land (Madhyadesa), tacked on to a central story; others are mythological episodes, theological discourses and philosophical disquisitions intended to teach the military caste its duties, especially its duty of reverence to the Brahmans. Taken as a whole, the Mahabharata may be said to form the cyclopædia of the heroic age in Northern India, with the struggle of the Pandavas and Kauravas as its original nucleus, and the submission of the military power to priestly domination as its later didactic design.'

The date at which the epic took its earliest form and its length at that time cannot be certainly decided.

The original form of the epic. That it was once comparatively short seems to be testified to in the poem itself, when Vyasa in the introduction, being about to dictate the epic, is made to say that he and his disciples so far knew 8,800 couplets, or *slokas*. Later on he refers again to the collection of verses relating the story of the Bharatas as consisting of 24,000 *slokas*, which is about the length to which the main story, stripped of all irrelevant episodes and other matter, now runs. On this evidence it has been



held by some scholars that the original Bharata legend, when first committed to writing, was only about one-third of the length to which it is now extended, that, in short, in its earliest form as a written epic the Mahabharata consisted of about 17,000 lines. This seems very probable, but it cannot be proved or disproved. All that can be certainly stated is that in its original form the epic was far shorter than its present stupendous length. By some students it has even been suggested that the facts of the story may have once been somewhat different; that the moral of the epic, namely, that greed and treachery must always be worsted at last by honour, justice and unselfishness, was introduced by Brahman revisers long after the legend of the rivalry of the Kauravas and Pandavas had been sung and written; and that Duryodhana was not always the villain he appears in the poem as we know it. Certain incidents in the epic, particularly in the narration of the great war, do not reflect that credit on the Pandavas that one would expect such semi-divine heroes to possess throughout their careers. But all this is supposition. We must take the epic as we have it; and it must be agreed that it contains and emphasizes most valuable moral lessons to which a more detailed reference will be made later on.

The uncertainty which surrounds the original form of the epic surrounds also the question of the date of its earliest composition. In his treatise on grammatical rules Panini, who lived about 350 B.C., mentions some of the chief names of the Mahabharata and even the title of the epic. It may be assumed that the Bharata legend was commonly current in his time and probably had actually taken a written poetical form.



Against this assumption is the negative evidence that the Greek Megasthenes, who was ambassador at Patna for three years about 300 B.C., does not mention the epic. But this does not amount to much. His writings as reproduced by other authors (for nothing of his own has survived) are mere fragments. He may have mentioned the epic and his reference to it was contained in a part of his account of India that has been lost; or he may have heard of the Mahabharata and not considered it worth mentioning, for, if it existed in a written form at that time, it was probably a far less imposing work than that we now know. The epic is mentioned in the *Grihya-sutra* of Asvalayara, who is believed to have lived towards the close of the fourth century B.C., and it is certain that it existed in poetical form in the time of Patanjali, the author of 'the great commentary on Panini' who lived about 150 B.C. The first direct foreign evidence of the existence of the Mahabharata is supplied by the Greek rhetorician, Dion Chrysostom (about A.D. 80). According to his account epic poetry had reached an elaborate and finished condition in the India of that time, and it may reasonably be assumed that both the Mahabharata and the Ramayana had then been written out to about the length of the latter epic as it exists to-day. Inscriptions prove that by the end of the fifth century A.D. the Mahabharata was regarded as an authority on legal points, that it was then as long as it is now and included the supplemental 'Harivamsa'. Authorities on the subject believe that by about A.D. 200 at the latest the Mahabharata had attained its present form and length, and that it is most unlikely that it had attained it before the Greek invasion of India, that is, about 300 B.C. To sum up, there seems ground for believing that in some far shorter form the Mahabharata existed

in writing about 400 B.C., that it was gradually extended during the succeeding five centuries and that it attained its present form in the course of the second century of the Christian era.

But long before 400 B.C., centuries probably before writing was invented, the main story and the heroic legends which had grown up around

The beginning  
of epic poetry in  
India.

it, had been related by fathers to their sons, generation after generation, and had been chanted year after year by the royal minstrels at the Hindu courts of Northern India. As we have seen, Sir W. W. Hunter would date the events narrated in the Mahabharata about 1200 B.C. They may well be far older. But, whatever their age, it is certain that they had become the commonplaces of heroic tradition in Hindustan centuries before they were, or could be, put into writing. From the Vedic hymns we learn that the Aryan chieftains were accompanied into battle by minstrels who chanted their praises and sang songs of triumph in celebration of their victories. This is the beginning of all epic poetry in all lands. The Icelandic Sagas were sung by the skalds or Scandinavian minstrels long before they were composed in writing. The Greek 'singers' chanted the triumphs of princes and chiefs long before these became immortalized in the verse of Homer. It has been the same in every land without doubt. The Hindu court minstrels and poets sang the legendary adventures of Yudhishtira and Rama before the princes and their followers from the earliest days of the Aryan Kingdoms in Northern India. Slowly in their hands the legends took definite shape; the details became exact; the characters of the Aryan personages became fixed. The Bharata story, based without question on actual facts relating to the

struggles of Aryan chiefs and their families, became so definite that it grew to be the common property of the Hindu peoples, repeated from mouth to mouth. In every peasant hut, around every village fire just as much as in the palace courtyard and the city bazaars, the legendary history of their Aryan forefathers was related, repeated and sung till it took a definite form. The characters became fixed in the roles we find them filling in the epic as we have it. When at last writing was invented, the history of the Pandavas was a definite story with definite characters.

In the early days of the Aryan settlement of Northern India Maharaja Dushmanta was ruler of the city and

The main story  
of the epic.

raj of Hastinapur, the country to the north-east of Delhi. The main story begins with the romantic marriage of

Dushmanta with the beautiful Sakuntala. Their son was Bharata who extended the kingdom and founded a great dynasty. Many generations later his descendant Maharaja Vichitra-virya died young leaving three sons. The eldest, Dhritarashtra, is blind and is therefore excluded from the throne in favour of his brother, the second son, Pandu. The third son Vidura, whose mother was a Sudra, for that reason had no claim to the throne. Pandu is a great conqueror and a popular king; but he is cursed by a *rishi* and, leaving the government of the country in his elder brother's hands, he retires to the woods. There he dies after his two wives Kunti and Madri have borne him five sons, the heroes of the epic, Yudhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadev. On Pandu's death the surviving wife Kunti returns to Hastinapur with the five sons. At this time, in spite of his physical disability, Dhritarashtra has become the accepted ruler of the land. But he is a just man who had great affection

for his brother and he receives his nephews kindly and arranges for their education with his own sons. During the infancy of the boys the question of the succession to the throne does not arise, but Dhritarashtra from the first recognizes the claims of his brother's elder son as heir to the crown and continues to govern merely as regent. The five sons of Pandu, known as the Pandavas, are handsome strong boys who quickly prove themselves the superiors of their cousins at all games. As they grow up, an intense jealousy arises between the two families. Dhritarashtra's eldest son, Duryodhana, the villain of the epic, is an evil-hearted lad, and his envy of his cousins reaches such a pitch that more than once he tries to poison Bhima of whose great strength and skill at games he is bitterly jealous. These murderous plots are unknown to Dhritarashtra who declares Yudhishtira Yuvaraja or heir apparent and thus brings matters to a crisis. Duryodhana and his brothers reproach their father for his unnatural conduct in excluding them from the succession, and at last they so work upon the old man's feelings that they persuade him to banish his nephews. An interesting feature of the story is the slow change of the Maharaja from a just and affectionate uncle to a jealous and suspicious man who grows at last to dislike and fear his brave young nephews.

Unknown to his father, Duryodhana plots to burn the Pandavas and Kunti in their place of banishment. They discover the scheme and escape into the woods, first setting fire to the palace and burning to death their would-be murderer, Duryodhana's servant. After many adventures, they go, disguised as poor Brahmins, to the capital of the Panchala kingdom where the *swayamvara* of Draupadi, the lovely daughter of the Raja, is to be held. By his marvellous feats with

the great bow, Arjuna wins her, and she becomes the wife of the five brothers. Meanwhile Dhritarashtra and his sons believe them to be dead. When the news that they are alive and have become the sons-in-law of a powerful raja reaches Hastinapur, there is great alarm. Duryodhana advises immediate war, but the old Maharaja is persuaded by his brother and his elder kinsmen to invite them back and divide the kingdom with them. For the time the feud is thus settled. The Pandavas leave Hastinapur and take possession of their half of the kingdom, founding Indraprastha, the modern Delhi. There they prosper exceedingly and win so many wars that Yudhishtira decides to perform a great sacrifice in celebration of his victories. The splendour of the ceremony, to which Dhritarashtra and his family are invited, excites the jealousy of Duryodhana once more. He persuades his father to summon the Pandavas to a gambling match. Yudhishtira, who plays Sakuni, Dhritarashtra's brother-in-law, a cunning dice thrower, loses his kingdom, his wealth, his army and everything he possesses. Then in desperation he gambles away his own and his brothers' liberty, finally staking Draupadi whom he loses. She is dragged into the hall by her hair and publicly insulted by Duryodhana. At this moment terrible portents of calamity occur and the frightened Maharaja restores everything to the Pandavas and tells them to return to their kingdom. No sooner have they gone than Duryodhana, who has now converted his father to his own hatred of his cousins, persuades Dhritarashtra to recall them. Once more they gamble and Yudhishtira loses his kingdom again and is condemned with his brothers to banishment for thirteen years, the last twelve months to be spent anywhere they choose but on the condition that



no one finds them. If they fulfil these conditions, their kingdom is to be restored to them.

They fulfil these conditions, spending the last year disguised as servants in the employ of a raja. They then send an envoy to demand the return of their kingdom. Duryodhana refuses to give them 'a yard of land' and insists upon war. Armies are collected and a war lasting eighteen days ends in the complete triumph of the Pandavas. All the Kauravas are killed and Yudhishtira enters Hastinapur in triumph. He and his brothers are reconciled with the aged Dhritarashtra who realizes that justice was on their side. But after some time, overwhelmed with his grief for his dead sons, the Maharaja cannot hide his feelings, and his reproaches cause bitter quarrels between him and his nephew Bhima. With his wife and Kunti he retires into the jungle where they all perish in a forest fire. Further misfortunes overtake the Pandavas and at last Yudhishtira resolves to renounce the throne and go into the mountains to die. He is followed by his brothers, Draupadi and a dog. One by one they drop dead on the way, till Yudhishtira is left alone with the dog. Finally, after his devotion has been further tested, he is united with his wife and brothers in heaven.

Yudhishtira, the chief hero of the epic, represents all that is noblest in Hindu chivalry. He is the personification of *dharma* (righteousness). Truthful and just, faithful to his word at whatever cost to himself

Some of the chief characters of the epic.

and those whom he loves, he is the defender and upholder of the highest standard of knightly honour. He is not faultless. In the game at dice he acts impulsively and exhibits temper and an obstinacy far from admirable. But his very obstinacy

arises from his stern obedience to the code of Kshatriya honour. Again, his hasty suspicion of Arjuna in the battle seems petty and mean considering all he owes to his warrior brother. But his patience under affliction, his reverence for his elders and his high ideals as ruler are only brought into more striking prominence by such very human weaknesses.

The boisterous Bhima, from his boyhood the terror of his cousins, is a vivid contrast to the brother whom he loves but whom he sometimes almost despises for what he thinks is his weakness and overscrupulousness. A great muscular man who eats as much as all the other four Pandavas and fights demons with his naked hands, Bhima is represented as brutal throughout the epic. There is nothing of the knight about him. He believes in force, does not know what fear means, and in his fiery outbursts of temper allows his great strength to incline him to act the bully. He shows the worst of his nature in the final duel with Duryodhana, and is reproved by Yudhishtira for his cowardly attack on the fallen man. But his is an attractive figure, manly and sincere, and under his brutal ways one feels that there is a very honest heart and an affectionate nature.

Arjuna is the accomplished soldier. He is not so powerful as Bhima, but he is a far greater military figure in the war which, with the aid of the divine hero Krishna, he practically decides by his marvellous skill as an archer. Throughout the epic he stands head and shoulders above all the other characters in feats of arms. Eager for battle, fearless, daring, resourceful, undismayed by defeat, generous in the moment of victory, he stands out in the main story of the epic as a chivalrous figure, morally as well as physically beautiful. His knightly tenderness of

nature is shown in his unwillingness to fight when at the beginning of the war he sees ranged against him his kinsmen and former friends.

Duryodhana, the villain of the poem, the eldest of Dhritarashtra's sons and the only one of them who takes a chief part in the action of the epic, is a sinister figure whose meanness and treachery are only relieved by his bravery. A sullen, deceitful, jealous lad, capable of cynically plotting to kill first Bhima and then all his cousins, he grows into a man whose ambitions are boundless. He paints his own weaknesses in his appeal to his father when he warns the unhappy doting Dhritarashtra that life is intolerable to him if the Pandavas prosper. His envy of his cousins is a mental disease which converts him into a morbid criminal who stops at nothing to rid himself of those who stand between him and his lust for power.

The old blind Maharaja's is a pathetic and at the last a truly tragic figure. His personality is perhaps the most interesting in the epic. We see him first as the affectionate father and brother, a wholly pleasant character, true to his brother's memory and just to his nephews. Largely at the mercy of those around him owing to his blindness, his kindly nature is slowly warped and soured by unworthy suspicions till at last he is capable of considering any means, even murder, to rid his sons of the threat to their prosperity. The keynote to his character is his doting affection for his unworthy eldest son. He adores Duryodhana to whom he can refuse nothing. We see him weakly surrendering to his son's villainies and as weakly repenting; struggling to do justice, but yielding more and more to the poison of envious suggestion, till he is carried over the precipice of ruin by his selfishly reckless son. At the last when all his sons are dead, the old



man's natural sense of justice causes him to live in pathetic reconciliation with his triumphant nephews for a time till his fatherly sorrow makes life intolerable and he retires into the forest with his old queen to die tragically in a jungle fire.

Bhishma, uncle of Pandu and his brothers, figures throughout as the patriarch of the family. Eldest son of Maharaja Santanu as a young man he has renounced his claim to the throne for his father's sake. On Santanu's death he becomes guardian of his younger brothers, and on their deaths supervises the education of Dhritarashtra, Pandu and Vidura. His protecting and wise influence is exercised also over the up-bringing of his great-nephews, by which time his age, his self-sacrifice and years of labour for the good of the family have made him the most venerated member of the royal house. Throughout the epic his counsels are always directed towards securing family unity. He is a man of high principle, steadfast in the maintenance of his vow of renunciation, in fulfilment of which he remains unmarried. At the last, on the ground that for years he has eaten the bread and salt of Dhritarashtra and his sons, he fights for them, and acts as commander-in-chief of the Kaurava army for the first ten days of the war, when he is killed by Arjuna. His sympathies are, however, with the Pandavas as representing the cause of justice and good faith. He is a Kshatriya turned sage and is credited with semi-divine qualities. In the war he fights fiercely and gallantly, his military skill and courage being undiminished by age.

Vidura, Dhritarashtra's younger brother, is from the first the friend of the Pandavas and by his warning saves them from death in the fire at Varanavata planned by Duryodhana. He is excluded from all

claims to the throne and devotes his life to learning. He takes a prominent part in the councils that are held to discuss the family feud and boldly denounces Duryodhana in the gambling scene and privately to his father who at one time banishes him for his honesty but afterwards recalls him. Vidura takes no part in the war which he does his best to prevent. He figures as the somewhat weak but kindly scholar, who continues to live at his brother's court, though disapproving of Dhritarashtra's conduct.

Drona, the tutor of the Pandavas and their cousins in feats of arms, is an old soldier, by birth a Kshatriya but revered as and acting the part of a Brahman when tutor of the young princes. He fills the role at times of the *purohita* or family priest. His skill as a soldier is represented as remarkable and the princes are trained by him to be great warriors, his favourite pupil being Arjuna. By marriage he is a kinsman of the family, having married Kripa, a half-sister of Bhishma. Drona considers himself bound to take the side of the Kauravas because he has been so long their dependent. He succeeds Bhishma as Commander-in-chief of their army and is killed on the fifth day of his command by Dhrishtadyumna, the son of his old enemy Drupada. He dies in the character of a Brahman *yogi*. Around him a good deal of mystery centres and he is represented in the battle as armed with magical powers. The character is not a very pleasant one. It is difficult not to feel that Drona is somewhat of a self-seeker and opportunist. At the last, however, he fights on the side that he is certain will not win from a sense of duty; and, despite his age, he fights very bravely.

An interesting character in the story is the military adventurer Karna. He appears first at the assault-at-arms and provokes the hostility of the Pandavas by

his challenge of Arjuna whose feats of arms he rivals by his skill. A mystery surrounds his birth, but for the purposes of the story he is represented as a Suta, the child of a Sudra mother by a Brahman father. While he is being congratulated by Duryodhana who is delighted at Arjuna's humiliation his father, an old charioteer from the Anga country, appears in the arena. Furious at his success, Bhima and Arjuna taunt him with his lowly birth and a fight is only prevented by the break-up of the tournament. This public insult throws him into the arms of Duryodhana and his brothers whose cause he thereafter espouses with consistent vindictiveness. His hatred of the Pandavas is increased by his scornful rejection by Draupadi publicly at her *swayamvara* on the ground that he is a Suta. It is impossible not to feel much sympathy with Karna who is recklessly brave, a great soldier and a loyal friend. Though he is well able to gauge the chances of the Pandavas of success, he refuses to desert Duryodhana and he dies heroically by an arrow of Arjuna, after having acted as the Commander-in-chief of the Kaurava army for two days.

A central figure of the latter portion of the main story of the Mahabharata is Krishna, a prince of the Yadava royal house of Gujarat. He plays no prominent part in the poem until towards the end when he befriends the Pandavas, especially Arjuna, for whom he acts as charioteer in the great war. He is represented as an *avatar* of Vishnu, and it is as God incarnate that his figure becomes of supreme importance in the story of the epic. In his earthly character Krishna is a somewhat wild young prince loving pleasure and the good things of life, keen to enjoy himself, not specially distinguished as a soldier but a brave fighter.

He is represented as worldly-wise, shrewd, practical and full of common sense. In the negotiations preceding the war he takes a chief part. The royal houses of Bharata and Yadava are connected and as a kinsman of the Bharatas Krishna appears to be equally well disposed to both sides until almost the last when he assists eagerly in the overthrow of Duryodhana, though he takes no active part in the fighting.

In his divine character Krishna becomes the central figure as the epic proceeds until his presence on the battle-field seems to indicate the whole purpose and explanation of the struggle. In the wonderful discourse with Arjuna before the battle begins, Krishna assumes the character of the avenging deity who has taken human form to punish wrong-doers (the Kauravas), and in the fighting he uses more than once his divine power by performing miracles. Some students of the epic think that there was no historical connection between the Bharatas and the Yadavas, but that the story of Prince Krishna was grafted on to the Mahabharata by the later Brahman revisers and compilers of the epic in order to use the poem to inculcate the worship of Vishnu. This is of great importance in helping to date the present form of the epic. The worship of Vishnu took a prominent place in the Hindu religion in post-Buddhistic days when the popularity of that faith was waning and the Brahmanical revival had begun. When the Kauravas have been destroyed and Yudhishtira reigns in Hastinapur, Krishna returns to Gujarat. Just before Yudhishtira's decision to renounce the throne, a great riot occurred at a banquet in the Yadava city of Dwaraka. All the Yadavas are killed in the blood-thirsty tumult in which Krishna takes part, killing the men who have murdered his son. Broken-hearted at

the loss of his kinsmen, Krishna goes into the woods and is there shot by a hunter who mistakes him for an animal. While the survivors in Dwaraka are lamenting his death, the city is destroyed by a tidal wave.

Many of the minor characters in the epic are excellently drawn. Arjuna's boy son Abhimanyu is a romantically heroic figure dying amid a crowd of his father's foes. The revengeful Aswatthaman, Drona's son, the cheating gambler Sakuni, the prudent Sanjaya, Dhritarashtra's charioteer, and a number of others all sustain the interest of the epic. There are many female characters; but three stand out as the chief and most impressive. Kunti, the mother of three of the Pandavas, is an heroic figure. Her devotion to her sons, her voluntary share in their exile, her tenderness to her step-sons, the twins Nakula and Sahadev, all mark her out as the perfect mother.

Dhritarashtra's wife Gandhari, whose eyes are always covered with a cloth because she does not wish to see if her husband cannot, is a well drawn character. In the feud her advice is always on the side of union and peace. Devoted to her sons, yet she realizes that Duryodhana is wrong. At the last when the war is lost and all her children are dead, nothing could be more human than her repugnance towards her nephews and her hatred of Bhima, her noble determination to conquer the feeling and her tenderness to childless Draupadi. A majestic figure, Gandhari dies as she has lived with but one purpose in life, to be the devoted wife and companion of the blind Maharaja.

Last of the chief women characters is Draupadi. It is unnecessary to discuss here the fact of her marriage to all the five brothers or the explanations for it which occur in the Mahabharata itself; and to speculate whether the incident, so repugnant to all



Brahmanical teaching, is a relic of those pre-historic days when the Aryan settlers arrived in India bringing very few of their women with them. Draupadi is the perfect wife. As a mother she does not play the parts Kunti and Gandhari play. Her five sons, mere boys, are killed by Aswatthaman during 'the night of slaughter' when he surprises the Pandava camp after the war is over. Draupadi's devotion to the brothers, her dignity throughout the scene of insult and abuse in the gambling hall, her patience and courage during the years of banishment, her fidelity under temptation, her reverence for her elders and her piety make up a character that represents the noblest traits of Hindu womanhood.

In its earliest forms it may be safely assumed that the Mahabharata had no 'moral', as the phrase is.

The 'Moral' of the Epic. It taught no lessons of right conduct; it did not seek to show that virtue is always finally rewarded and wickedness punished. It was the story of the struggle for a

kingdom fought out savagely and with all the rancour and vindictiveness that so often marks quarrels between relatives. Such virtues as the chief actors possessed would be naturally those belonging to the barbaric soldier, fierce courage, great physical strength, patience under pain and hardship and the rough and ready brutal sense of justice of the man who expects, as he shows, no pity, whose right is might and whose motto is *Vae victis* 'Woe to the fallen'. No doubt, as the centuries passed, the heroes of the epic were endowed by the poets and minstrels with some at least of the more amiable virtues. All national legends shows this tendency for time to throw the mantle of romance around the often probably gaunt and repulsive forms of traditionary ancestors. But it was left, perhaps for

those who first committed the epic to writing, and certainly for the Brahman authors, compilers and revisers responsible for its present form, to give the poem the moral character it now possesses. Might is no longer right in the Mahabharata as we know it: there is a higher law. We see the Pandavas robbed of their inheritance and driven destitute into banishment. We see them wandering in the woods without food or water. We see them hunted by foes who would kill them if they could. When fortune has smiled on them and they have settled at Indraprastha, we see them again cheated of their kingdom and wealth and driven once more into the jungles to live as beggars, compelled at last to disguise themselves and take service in menial positions to escape the vindictive pursuit of their enemies. Yet they triumph at last. It is the lesson of the homely proverb that 'honesty is the best policy'; that honour, truth and patience under affliction win reward even in this world. The moral lesson of the epic has been made as complete as a strikingly dramatic series of events can make it. And the moral does not end with the triumph of the heroes. There is the further moral that worldly happiness, however complete and perfect, does not last, that it is unsatisfying, that one must look beyond this earth if one is to find real happiness. In the height of his glory Yudhishthira finds no comfort in earthly pomp and sovereignty. Weighed down with the thought of the cost of his victory, with remorse that he has had 'to wade through slaughter to a throne and shut the gates of mercy on' friends and kinsmen, he starts out to the wilderness to die, and his brothers and the faithful Draupadi go with him.

These are the human lessons of the poem. But the introduction of Krishna seems to lift the epic into a still

higher plane of moral teaching. While the additions, changes and revisions of Brahman commentators have made of an Aryan legend a gospel of Vishnuism, they have conveyed the suggestion of the perpetual conflict in the world of the good and evil principles. The Bharata tradition takes on an allegorical character. Yudhishtira and his brothers are personifications of righteousness and justice. Duryodhana and his kinsmen represent the forces of evil,—treachery, tyranny, selfishness, injustice, falsehood and broken faith. When it seems as if evil will prevail, the Almighty God in the human form of Krishna intervenes and defeats the unjust and wicked.

This moral is indicated directly in the *Bhagavad Gita*, the discourse of Krishna with Arjuna before the

the *Bhagavad Gita*. battle when he tells him that, whether he is willing to kill them or not, the

Kauravas must die. The two armies are drawn up facing each other on the plain of Kurukshetra. At Arjuna's request Krishna has driven the car forward between the two armies that he may survey the field of battle. Overcome at the sight of his kinsmen and friends waiting in their cars to fight each other, Arjuna throws down his bow and declares that he will not fight, that no earthly kingdom is worth winning at the price of the slaughter of one's kindred. Krishna rebukes Arjuna's weakness and at last reveals himself as Vishnu, convincing him that it is his duty as God's instrument to kill those whose time has come. The discourse, which expounds the highest doctrines of Brahmanism, is by its dignity of tone and nobility of thought one of the most remarkable treatises in all philosophical literature. It begins by explaining the illusion of death and then teaches that work, not for reward but as a duty to God, must be done by all



who desire union with God. The life of the hermit renouncing the world and flying from temptation and that of the arrogant man whose ambition for power and pleasure has no limit, are alike condemned. Only by devotion (*bhakti*) to God, by submitting themselves in every detail of life to God's purposes, can men become dear to Him.

The date of the *Bhagavad Gita* is unknown, but it must certainly be among the latest, as it is far the most remarkable, of the additions to the Mahabharata. Scholars think that it must have been composed subsequently to the beginning of the Christian Era as it combines the pantheistic teaching later systematized in the Vedanta system of Hindu philosophy and the doctrine of *bhakti*, devotion to Krishna as the Supreme Being, both of them post-Buddhistic developments of Brahmanism.

## INTRODUCTION

IF you look at the map of India, you will see that the city of Delhi stands in the centre of northern India,

The Ancient City of Delhi. that great plain lying between the Himalayas and the Satpura and

Vindhya mountains. Delhi is not the centre of the whole land of India. That would be nearer to Jhansi, to Saugor or to Jubbulpore. But the ground on which Delhi stands is in the centre of that part of India, the real Hindustan of history, of which there are any records from remote times. The inhabitants of Hindustan first came into contact with the outer world at the period of the Persian and Greek invasions, about 2,500 years ago. So we find, as we should expect, that the district of Delhi, the centre of Hindustan, has always been one of importance. Some miles north-west of the city, on the plain of Panipat, is the traditional scene of the battle, described in the *Mahabharata*, between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. On the site of Delhi has been built city after city, perhaps for two or three thousand years. No one can be certain when the first of these cities was begun. According to the tradition recorded in the *Mahabharata*, the first of all was Indraprastha founded by the Pandava prince Yudhishtira. Of the size and history of this legendary city there is no authentic record. The Mahomedan chronicler, Firishta, repeated a story of his time that many centuries after the date of Yudhishtira, but before the Greek invasion, the first

city of Delhi was built by a raja named Dhilu. But that is a legend. Nothing certain is known of such a city.

The first historical city of Delhi was founded in A.D. 993. In the middle of the next century Anangapala,

History of Hindu  
Delhi.

a Rajput chieftain and head of the Tomara clan, did much to make the new city beautiful. He built the Red Fort in which the Kutb Minar now stands and he erected twenty-seven splendid temples. Of him the legend is told that he removed the famous iron pillar, though warned by the Brahmans that his family would only reign so long as it stood where it was. When it was dragged out of the earth, the end (so the story says) was bloodstained, because it had been embedded in the head of the serpent king who upheld the earth. Anangapala was very frightened and ordered the pillar to be replaced. But, though they tried hard, they could never fix it again firmly in the ground. It was always *dhila* (loose); hence the name of the city. But this is only a tale. The name Delhi or Dilli is older than the Tomara kings. At Delhi the Tomara Rajputs reigned for about a century. In 1151 they were conquered by Bisaldeo, chief of the Chohan Rajputs of Ajmer. The most famous of the Chohan kings of Delhi was Prithvi Raj, the grandson of Bisaldeo. He was so powerful that, when the Moslems, led by Muhammad of Ghor, invaded Northern India in 1191, the other Rajput princes made him their leader. He commanded their vast army and defeated the invaders. But the Moslems came back in 1192, and on the plain of Panipat won a victory that made them masters of Northern India. Prithvi Raj was taken prisoner and killed. With his death the history of Hindu Delhi ends.

From that time the city became the capital of the Mahomedan rulers of India, first of the five dynasties known as the Sultans of Delhi and then of the Mogul Emperors.

The Later History of Delhi.

It was outside Delhi on the plain of Panipat, where the fate of India has been so often decided, that Babar became master of Northern India in 1526. Thirty years afterwards, on the same field of battle, Akbar won back his father's throne. But Akbar and Jehangir kept their courts generally at Agra or Lahore. Shah Jehan rebuilt Delhi where it stands to-day, fortifying it, erecting the Jama Masjid and other splendid buildings. From that time Delhi was the capital of the Mogul empire. In 1737 the Mahratta army led by the Peshwa Baji Rao camped beneath its walls, while terms were dictated to Muhammad Shah, tenth Mogul Emperor. Two years later the city was captured by Nadir Shah who ordered a general massacre. His soldiers looted the houses of the poor as well as the rich. For fifty-eight days these robberies continued. In 1756 Ahmad Shah Abdali, Nadir's successor on the throne of Afghanistan, occupied the city and tortured and massacred the people to extort a large sum. In 1803 during the second Mahratta war Delhi was captured by the British army under Lord Lake. He found the old Mogul Emperor, Shah Alam, living there as a prisoner of the Mahrattas.

Rather more than a half a century later Delhi, as the centre of the Sepoy mutiny, was the scene of some of the saddest incidents in India's history. With the close of that struggle and the deportation to Rangoon of Bahadur Shah, the last of the Moguls, Delhi for the time lost its position as the capital city of India. But its historical associations and its central position made

it the natural choice of the British Government for great state ceremonies. It was there that on the 1st of January, 1877, was held the durbar to proclaim Queen Victoria Empress of India. It was in Delhi that in 1903 Lord Curzon celebrated the coronation of King Edward VII with splendid ceremonies. In December, 1911, on the eve of the coronation durbar held on the 12th of that month, King-Emperor George V rode in state into the venerable city. That durbar was the most splendid ceremony ever witnessed in India. Seated on silver thrones the Emperor and Empress received the homage of all the princes and the chiefs of Hindustan. The Emperor addressed the people and told them that Delhi was to be once more the capital of India.

And so, after many centuries and many changes of fortune, the ground around Delhi is the site of the splendid new capital of India which is being built there by the order of the King-Emperor. This ground is very sacred to all Hindus, for it is the scene of the chief events in the wonderful epic of the *Mahabharata*, the main story of which we will now begin to tell. About sixty miles to the north-east of the modern city is the site of the ancient Hastinapura, capital of Raja Bharata, after whom the epic is named. In the district lived and died the heroes of his house, whose joys and sorrows are related in the poem.

## THE MAHABHARATA

ONCE upon a time there lived in India a mighty Maharaja named Dushmanta. He was young and as handsome as a god. He was very

Maharaja  
Dushmanta goes  
a-hunting.

strong and conquered all his enemies in battle. His subjects loved him, for he was just and wise and ruled them well. Dushmanta was a great hunter and skilled in the use of arrow, spear and mace. He was never tired of chasing deer, elephants, tigers and all the animals of the jungle. One day, attended by his courtiers, by huntsmen and men-at-arms, Dushmanta left his palace in Hastinapura to hunt in the forests. For days the royal party rode through the dense woods, and the glades echoed to the shrill notes of the huntsman's horn, to the angry roar of dying tigers and the trumpetting of elephants maddened with wounds. At night the forest was lit up with the fires and torches of the royal camp. First one and then another forest was beaten for game and the hunters wandered farther and farther from Hastinapura. At last one day the Maharaja, having ridden hard after a wounded beast, lost his way and found himself, with only one follower, far from his night's camping ground. Fatigued with hunger and thirst, he reached a desolate plain on the edge of the forest. Crossing this, he rode into a beautiful woodland. Beneath the shade of great trees covered with blossoms was a carpet of the



softest and greenest grass. Dushmanta was delighted, and he allowed his horse to wander on down the shady avenues echoing with the notes of sweet-voiced birds, forgetting that he was lost and that he had no shelter for the night and no food. Cool breezes fragrant with the smell of fresh flowers blew down the path of the prince as he rode slowly onward. Soon he came to a cluster of huts on the banks of the sacred stream Malini. Here *rishis* lived a life of prayer and meditation beneath the shade of the tall leafy trees that grew on the river's edge. On the altar the sacred fire burned with a clear flame; and so holy was the peace of the spot that it laid a spell even on the fierce animals of the jungle. Tigers and cheetahs came to the water to drink side by side with the timid antelope and the graceful gazelle. All was peace and friendship.

Dismounting, the Maharaja advanced towards the *rishis* and worshipped them. Now he knew where

Maharaja  
Dushmanta meets  
Sakuntala.

he was. Near this settlement was, he remembered, the hermitage of the famous saint Kanwa. Anxious to visit that holy place and to pay his respects to the sage, Dushmanta asked the *rishis* to direct him how to go there. Then he entered the forest again. After some distance, when he knew that he was approaching the spot, he dismounted. Bidding his attendant await his return and laying aside his weapons and jewels and golden ornaments, humbly he entered on foot the forest in which stood the *rishi's* home. After walking through leafy glades more shady and more fragrant with flowers than any through which he had yet passed, he saw the hermit's hut. But there seemed to be no one there; the house appeared to be empty. So he called out: 'Is any one within?' His voice echoed through the silent woods. At first

there was no answer. Then a maiden beautiful as Lakshmi herself but dressed in plain and humble clothes came to the door. Though she was so young and alone, she showed no fear of the handsome young king who stood before her gazing at her with eager admiration. With perfect courtesy and shy dignity she bade him welcome, offering him a seat and water to wash his feet. Then, after a minute, she asked why he had come. 'I have come,' replied Dushmanta, 'to worship the blessed Rishi Kanwa. Tell me, fair maid, where I can find him.' 'The illustrious *rishi*', she said, 'has gone to fetch fruit. Pray sit awhile. He will soon return'.

As Dushmanta sat looking at the young girl, his heart was filled with love for her. Never had he seen

Dushmanta woos  
and weds the fair  
Sakuntala.

woman so beautiful. As he gazed at her, he felt that he would give wealth, kingdom, even life itself, for her sake. To make her his queen became the greatest wish of his heart. Presently he spoke to her, asking her to tell him who she was and how it happened that she was living in the forest with the great sage. 'I am the daughter of the wise and famous sage Kanwa.' Dushmanta was astonished. 'How can this be?' he asked. 'How can you be the daughter of the holy man who has never married?' 'As I have never known my father, she replied, 'I call Kanwa father. He has told me that I am the child of Visvamitra the sage and Menaka, the chief of the Apsaras. When I was an infant, he found me lying on the river bank here. Round me sat birds of prey to guard me from harm. He took me to his hut and adopted me as his child, calling me Sakuntala (bird-protected). Thus I have come to be known as the daughter of Kanwa.'



Delighted with the simple manners of the girl and charmed with her beauty, Dushmanta begged her to be his queen and Sakuntala shyly consented to marry him. So when the *rishi* returned and the Maharaja had worshipped him, he told Kanwa of his hopes. Convinced of the young man's earnestness, Kanwa invited him to stay awhile in the forest with him and Sakuntala. So, Dushmanta walked back to where he had dismounted and ordered his attendant to go to Hastinapura and tell his ministers that he would stay with the sage Kanwa for awhile. Then he returned to the hut where he lived the simple life of a *rishi*. After a time the sage consented to his marriage with Sakuntala. The ceremony took place in the peaceful wood, and the Maharaja rejoiced in having won so lovely a bride.

But soon it became necessary for the Maharaja to return to Hastinapura, and he was afraid to take Sakuntala with him. Before Kanwa

Dushmanta returns to Hastinapura and forgets Sakuntala.

had consented to the marriage, he had made Dushmanta promise that, if a son were born, he should reign over the kingdom after Dushmanta's death. Now when Dushmanta promised, he meant to keep his word. But he knew that it would be very difficult to keep it, for he was already married and had sons. He was also afraid that his subjects would scorn the beautiful unknown bride whom he had married secretly in the forest. So he determined to go to Hastinapura first by himself, and afterwards send for Sakuntala. Many times, when she wept at the thought of his departure, he promised that he would send for her, that escorts of soldiers would come and bring her in honour to his capital. Sakuntala did not care for splendour or state ; she cared only for him,

and she wept bitterly when at last he had to go away.

No sooner had Dushmanta left the *rishi's* cottage where he had lived such happy days than a spell was cast on him by a cruel *rakshasa* who hated happiness and liked to make people wretched. This demon made Dushmanta forget Sakuntala. When the Maharaja reached his palace and began to live his old life, it was as if he had never met his beautiful wife. He remembered nothing. Poor Sakuntala waited and waited for the escort of soldiers who never came. But Kanwa, who could foresee the future, bade her be patient and not weep. So she lived always in hope of Dushmanta's return. More than ever did she long to see him when their son was born. He was a lovely child and he grew up to be a beautiful and strong boy. So strong was he that when he was only six he had strength far beyond his years. He chased in sport the animals of the jungle and bound them to trees. At last when Kanwa knew that the time had come, he bade Sakuntala take the lad to his father that he might be installed as the heir apparent. So he sent her to Hastinapura under the care of some of his followers.

When the disciples of Kanwa with the boy and his mother reached the presence of Dushmanta, the Maharaja was sitting in his court surrounded by his ministers and courtiers. After they had made their obeisance, the beautiful Sakuntala addressed Dushmanta saying: 'Maharaja, here is our son. Fulfil the promise which you made to me when we were wedded in the hermitage of Kanwa.' As she spoke, the spell cast on him so many years before was broken and he remembered all that had occurred. Then a

Dushmanta recognizes his wife and heir.

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bitter feeling of shame came over him because he had been bewitched into treating Sakuntala so cruelly. But his position was very difficult and he saw that he must pretend still that he did not know what Sakuntala meant. So he said : ' Who are you, wicked woman, in *sanyasi* dress who comes here with such silly stories of marriages and promises ? '

Sakuntala knew nothing of the spell and the difficult position in which the Maharaja was placed ; so she was naturally very angry. ' You won my love and then you deserted me. Therefore you are angry with me for coming here. But I am your wife and I deserve respect. This is your son and mine. Do not drive him away. Is there any happiness greater for a father than to hold in his arms the son who runs to clasp his knees ? Why then do you treat so cruelly this child who desires to climb on your knee ? One day, when you were hunting, you came to Kanwa's home and met and wedded me. Now you will not recognize me as your wife. If this is your will, I am ready to return to my forest home. But you cannot desert your son. He must rule over the kingdom when you are dead. You swore that he should succeed to the throne. You dare not break your word.'

Poor Sakuntala was broken-hearted. Kissing the boy good-bye, she was walking out of the durbar hall when a voice from the sky was heard by all. ' Dushmanta, love and protect your son,' it said : ' do not insult your wife. Let the boy be named Bharata (the supporter), for he will support and bring honour to your royal house. Fulfil your pledged word. He is your heir.' All the ministers and courtiers heard the heavenly voice and the Maharaja, rejoicing at the evidence thus granted to him, said : ' It is true : this

is my dear son and Sakuntala here is my wife. All that she has related is the truth. For years I have suffered under a spell which made me forget our marriage. When I saw her, I remembered everything; but I feared that, if at once I acknowledged my son, there might be those of my subjects who would reject his claims to my throne. So, while I pretended to repel my dear wife, I prayed that the gods might grant me proof before all that what she has said is the truth.' Then the ministers and priests and people rose and bowed before Sakuntala and her child; and Dushmanta, stepping down from his throne, took them both in his arms and kissed them and seated them at his side. Within a few days the ceremony of acknowledgement was held and Bharata was installed as heir to the throne, and for many years Dushmanta lived in happiness with Sakuntala.

When Dushmanta died, Bharata reigned at Hastinapura. He was a just and virtuous monarch to whom

The reign of  
Santanu : The birth  
of Bhishma.

his subjects never looked in vain for protection. He was the founder of the great race that bore his name.

Under his rule the kingdom became great and powerful and many kings paid him tribute. After him many kings reigned in Hastinapura and the fame of the house of Bharata spread far and wide. Fourteenth in descent from him was Santanu. He was a great and powerful sovereign, and a wise and just ruler. So widespread was his might that he was called king of kings, because all other princes respected him and regarded him as their chief. Under him there was a golden age when all living things were at peace. Santanu was merciful towards man and beast. He ordered that the wild animals were not to be killed needlessly, and that property was to be respected and that all

men were to live in friendship together. In his time the robber ceased to rob and the murderer laid aside his knife. The bania gave full measure of grain and the judge dispensed the purest justice, so good was the influence of this great monarch over all his subjects. Santanu had one son, Devavrata, borne to him by his celestial wife, the nymph Ganga. In beauty, strength and virtue this son resembled the Maharaja. In battle he was a great warrior, as skilled in the use of the bow as Indra himself. He had been installed as heir apparent and the people rejoiced that their king had so noble a son to rule the land after him.

But the Maharaja was lonely and wished for another wife now that he had lost the mother of his eldest son.

B h i s h m a  
renounces the  
throne.

After four years he met and loved a beautiful maiden who loved him also. Her father was very proud and replied to the Maharaja's request for his daughter's hand that his condition was that her son must be the heir to the throne. When Santanu heard this, he was very sad, for he loved his son Devavrata dearly and he did not wish to disinherit him. So he went back to his palace and said nothing to his son or his ministers as to what had happened. But his love for the girl and the struggle in his mind between that and his affection for Devavrata made him so sad that he no longer went hunting; he cared no more for music and festivals but moped and fretted till he was thin and ill. When Prince Devavrata saw that the Maharaja became daily more melancholy, he was anxious. He asked his father how it was that, though the kingdom was prospering and all was well, he was so sad. Santanu was ashamed to tell his son the truth, but he told him half of it. 'You, my son', he replied, 'are the only child I have. You love



sport and war and are eager to face the dangers of the forest. If I lose you, how shall our line be saved? It is said that he that has one son has no son. You are a hero fond of fighting. It is likely that you will die on the battle-field. Who then will succeed to my throne?'

Devavrata thought that his father should marry again and he consulted Santanu's chief minister. The old diwan knew why his master was sad and he told Devavrata. Learning that it was in his power to make his father happy, the young prince summoned the Kshatriya chiefs and ministers and with them he rode to the home of the maiden's father. There in the presence of all he renounced his claim to the throne and promised that, if a son were born, he should be recognized as heir to the throne. To show that he was in earnest, he took the vow of Brahmacharya, swearing that he would never marry.

The chiefs and all present applauded the filial devotion of Devavrata and from that day he was called

Birth of Pandu,  
Dhritarashtra and  
Vidura.

by all Bhishma (the Terrible) because his life was devoted to war and dangerous field sports. Santanu's marriage was celebrated with great splendour and he lived in happiness with his queen. She bore two sons, Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. The elder was killed in battle. While the younger was still a lad, Santanu died and he succeeded to the throne under the guardianship of Bhishma as regent. When he was of age, he married two lovely sisters. They became the mothers of two sons, the eldest, born blind, was named Dhritarashtra. The second who had a skin fairer than his brother was called Pandu. (Pale). The Maharaja's third son was Vidura whose mother was a Sudra. Vichitravirya died when he was



still quite young. Pandu became Maharaja because his elder brother was blind. Bhishma became regent and he brought up the three boys as if they were his own. Under his rule the kingdom prospered exceedingly. The fields gave rich harvests ; the herds multiplied ; the trees in the orchards and gardens were laden with fruit. The people were prosperous and happy. All were at peace and the crowded cities and the country districts echoed with the hymns and songs of worshippers and feasters. The royal armies and guards protected the kingdom and the people, so that there were no wars and no thieves and house-breakers. ' Give ' and ' eat ' were the words that were heard each day and all day in the houses of the Kuru chiefs who fed the people crowding round their gates.

Bhishma brought his nephews up strictly. The boys were taught to wield the mace, to draw stout bows, to ride on horseback and on elephants. Pandu was a great bowman ; Dhritarashtra, though blind, was the strongest of the three brothers ; Vidura was a scholar, versed in the Vedas and in the study of morality. When he was of age, Dhritarashtra was married to Gandhari, the beautiful daughter of the Raja of Ghandara.<sup>1</sup> Pandu wedded Kunti, the daughter of the Raja Sura of the Yadavas, winning her at her *swayamvara*. As an infant she had been adopted by Kunti-bhoja, Raja of the Bhojas who lived on the Nerbudda and on the southern slopes of the Vindhya hills. As his second wife Bhishma chose for him Madri, the sister of Salya, Raja of Madra.<sup>2</sup> After reigning for some years in peace, Pandu marched from Hastinapura against the enemies of the kingdom. First he de-

<sup>1</sup> The modern Afghanistan. The name is still preserved in Kandahar.

<sup>2</sup> The ancient name for Bhutan.

stroyed the robber tribes of Dasarna. Then he defeated the Raja of Magadha whom he slew, taking all his treasure, his chariots and elephants. Thereafter Pandu led his victorious armies into Mithila, and he fought and conquered the king of the Videhas and Kasi, Cumbha and Pundra submitted to his will. All the kings paid tribute in jewels and gold and precious stones, in cattle and horses, in chariots and elephants, in camels, buffaloes and sheep, in costly carpets and skins and fine raiment. When they heard the news of these victories, the people of Hastinapura rejoiced at the glories of their king, crying † 'The power and dignity of the house of Bharata is restored ! The enemies of the kingdom have been punished. From all the kings does that tiger among men, Pandu, our beloved sovereign, demand tribute. Blessings on the royal stock of Bharata !' When Pandu returned to his capital, his subjects crowded out into the roads to greet him, and they marvelled much at the wagons heaped up with the spoils of war and at the procession of sleek horses and stately elephants, fat cattle and goats and sheep stretching for miles behind the car of the Maharaja.

Thereafter there were many weeks of feasting in Hastinapura. The monarch celebrated his victories

Pandu renounces  
the throne. by lavish gifts of gold and jewels,  
by sacrifices and stately ritual,  
by banquets and merry-makings, by  
dances and plays. When these weeks of national  
rejoicing came to an end, Pandu, entrusting the work  
of ruling to Dhritarashtra, went into the forest to  
hunt. On the southern slopes of the Himalayas under  
the shade of huge trees the royal camp was set up, and  
to it Pandu and his queens, his courtiers, huntsmen and  
men-at-arms went. There they lived a life of freedom.

and pleasure, roaming the woods in search of game. By evil chance it happened one day that Pandu killed a *rishi* when he was shooting a deer. As he fell dying to the ground, the *rishi* cursed him for his cruelty. Pandu was very sad, for he knew that he could not escape the curse. So he decided to renounce the world and its pleasures and to become a *sanyasi*. 'Dressed in deer skins, leaves and the bark of trees,' he said, 'and living on fruits and roots, I will wander in the woods, spending my life in prayer and penance.' Kunti and Madri tried to persuade him not to go, but when they knew that he was determined, they said that they would go also. So Pandu gave to the Brahmans the splendid jewels that he wore, his bracelets and earrings and his costly robes. The two queens also stripped themselves of their rings and gems. Then Pandu said to his attendants: 'Go quickly to Maharaja Dhritarashtra and tell him that my queens and I have gone into the woods to live a life of penitence. Henceforward the throne is his. We have given up everything. Wealth and royal state and happiness are no longer for us. Give my brother my blessings. May he live long to rule the kingdom in peace and splendour.' So the messengers went to Hastinapura and told Dhritarashtra, and he mourned many days for his brother and all the people wept at the loss of their gallant young king.

For years Pandu and his queens wandered in poverty in the woods. But they were blessed by the birth of five sons dear to the gods, children of great beauty and strength. These boys were fated to be the glories of the house of Bharata and to protect and increase the power of the Kuru race. The eldest of them was Yudhishtira who had the god of justice

Death and  
funeral rites of  
Pandu.

as his special guardian. To the second son, Bhima, Vayu, the god of the winds, acted as godfather. To the third, Arjuna, Indra extended his protection. These were the children of Kunti. Queen Madri bore twins, Nakula and Sahadev who were guarded by the twin gods the Aswins. It was decreed that Pandu should die in the woods. So it befell that one day Yama struck him down and took the soul away, and the two queens wept beside the corpse. Then, summoning the Brahmans, a bier was brought and followed by his sorrowing wives and children and the Brahmans chanting *mantras* the body of the Maharaja was carried to Hastinapura.

When Dhritarashtra and Bhishma heard the sad news, they came out of the city with a great retinue to receive the corpse. As the procession approached, the *rishis* cried out : ' O Maharaja, your brother Pandu, the Brahmacharya who had forsaken his palace and the splendours of royal life and lived as a *rishi* in the pathless woods, has died. Here is his body and his wives and his five sons. Let these be received with all honour and let the corpse be burned with ceremony befitting a king.' Then Dhritarashtra and Bhishma mourned the Maharaja, and all the people wept aloud. The priests lit the sacred fire and fed it with ghee, with aloe, sandal and other fragrant woods. The funeral gifts were made, Dhritarashtra distributing much gold and jewels, land and cattle. Shrouded in costly cloths and sprinkled with scents and covered with flowers, the body of Pandu was laid on a bier of gold and jewels, hung with garlands and many ornaments. Upon it sat the Queen Madri who desired to die with her lord. Followed by the mourning crowds and the chanting Brahmans, the bier was taken out of the city. Over it was held the white umbrella and

attendants waved the *chamaras*, emblems of sovereignty, while musicians played funeral dirges. Brahmans and Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras followed the bier, praising the dead monarch and crying: 'Prince, where hast thou gone? For us all is woe and misery now that we have lost thee.' At last the procession reached the banks of the Ganges where in a shady wood the site for the burning had been chosen. The bier was set down and the body of the brave sovereign was reverently washed with water from the sacred river poured on it from vessels of gold. Then it was smeared with sandal paste. Robed in fine white linen, the corpse was laid on the funeral pyre. Beside it Madri took her place and amid the lamentations of the people the pyre was lighted. Fed with ghee and costly oils and woods the flames quickly darted up around the devoted Rani and her dead lord.

When the public mourning was at an end, Kunti and her five sons lived in the palace with the Maharaja, Gandhari and their children, and were treated by Dhritarashtra with much affection. Bhishma became the guardian of the five boys, demanding obedience from them as if he were their father, and superintending their education. Many sons had been born to Dhritarashtra during the years that had elapsed since Pandu had retired into the woods. The eldest of them was Duryodhana. He had been born on the same day as Bhima, and ill omens had heralded his birth. The sky had been overcast and stormy winds had blown. Fires had broken out all over the city and the asses, the crows, the vultures and the jackals had uttered their cries and screams all together in a chorus of woe. The Brahmans had warned Dhritarashtra, saying: 'This son brings the

The Pandavas  
are brought up  
with their cousins.



house of Bharata menace of misfortune. It were better that he should not live. These are terrible omens. The child will be the ruin of your race.' But the Maharaja's heart was naturally tender towards his first-born and he spared the infant who grew up a strong and fine child.

So the many sons of Dhritarashtra and the five sons of Pandu were brought up together. But there was always rivalry between them, for the former thought 'Had Pandu's sons not been born, the kingdom would be ours. As it is, Yudhishtira is the heir and some day he and his brothers will rule here and we shall be driven out.' And the Pandu princes said: 'Our father was really king: our uncle was only regent for him. Why then should Dhritarashtra reign as if the throne belonged to him and his sons?' The jealousy between the two families was made the more bitter because of the strength and beauty of the Pandava princes. Of the five Bhima was the strongest: he was equal to ten of the Kaurava boys. As a child he delighted to tease his cousins, pulling their hair, playing tricks on them and making them fight with one another. Sometimes just to frighten them, he would drag them under water and hold them there till they were nearly drowned. As the boys grew older and began to play serious games of skill, it was the Pandavas who always won. In foot races, in games of ball, in riding and at feats of arms the Kauravas were always defeated till they grew bitterly jealous of their powerful proud young cousins. Bhima specially angered them, for he was so strong that, try as they might, they could never master him, and he delighted to challenge them to struggles in which he was always the victor, throwing them on the ground and sometimes hurting them a good deal.



Thus it was that the boys grew to hate each other ; but most of all Duryodhana hated Bhima. Duryodhana was an evil-minded boy and, when he found that he could not conquer Bhima at games, he determined to kill his cousin. ' If he lives ', he thought, ' I shall never get the throne. With Yudhishtira and Arjuna and the twins I can deal, but I must first kill Bhima '. He knew that he could not kill him in fair fight, so he plotted to get Bhima at a disadvantage when he could be easily mastered. The only way he could think of was to poison him. Now on the banks of the Ganges had been built a pavilion for the young princes where they went for their water sports and where they had feasts of sweetmeats and fruits. This summer-house was in the midst of lovely gardens filled with fragrant flowers, the scented air cooled with the spray of fountains spurting their clear water over the soft rich grass. Here the lads loved to come and play by the river's edge or to race one another swimming in the clear stream. One day when Duryodhana's cruel plan was made, the princes came out to the garden house. They raced and wrestled together ; and then they sat down to a meal and began to give each other sweetmeats and other dainties. This was the wicked Duryodhana's chance and he offered Bhima some sweets that he had had prepared with poison. Bhima knew that his cousin did not like him, but he did not think that he would be so wicked as to try to kill him. So he took the sweets and ate freely. When the meal was over and Duryodhana knew that the poison would soon do its deadly work, he challenged Bhima to swim against him, and the two lads soon outdistanced the others. After a time the poison overcame Bhima, strong though he was, and he sank.

Duryodhana was very glad that his wicked plot had succeeded. He swam back and told the other boys that Bhima had beaten him in the race and had swum on towards the city.

So the princes mounted their horses and rode back to the palace. When the Pandavas reached home, they

The Pandavas discover their cousin's plot against Bhima.

ran to their mother's apartments crying: 'Bhima, Bhima! Mother, has Bhima come home yet?' When Kunti heard their eager voices, she was frightened. She had watched with anxiety the growing ill-feeling between her sons and their cousins, and she knew the evil nature of Duryodhana. She told the boys that their brother had not returned and that they must go back at once and search for him. When they had gone back to the river, she sent for her brother-in-law Vidura and told him her fears. 'Duryodhana', she said, 'is malicious and cruel. He is jealous of my sons and specially of Bhima. I fear the worst.' But Vidura comforted her. 'Bhima's life may have been attempted, but have no fear. Your sons will live long to be the glory of the house of Bharata.'

When the Pandavas reached the garden, they searched the river bank. At last they found Bhima asleep. When they waked him, he told them that, after swimming some distance with Duryodhana, he had become exhausted and had sunk. After what had seemed many hours during which he dreamed that he had visited the kingdom of the Nagas and had been cured by them, he had risen to the surface and had had enough strength to swim to the bank and clamber out. After a while he recovered completely, and then he told his brothers that he was sure that Duryodhana had poisoned him with sweetmeats. They all went back to the

palace and told their mother their suspicions. But by the advice of their uncle Vidura they pretended that they knew nothing of Duryodhana's wickedness. When the latter heard that Bhima had returned home, he was both frightened and angry. But he was determined to get rid of his cousin and he made other plots to kill him, first by poison again, which failed to hurt him because Bhima was so strong, and then in other ways. Still the Pandavas, by the advice of their uncle Vidura, made no complaint to Maharaja Dhritarashtra.

About this time there came to Hastinapura a famous Brahman teacher named Drona. He was the son of the sage Bharadwaja. From the famous

Drona becomes  
the tutor of the  
young princes.

warrior Rama, son of Jamadagni, he had learned the science of arms and had obtained some wonderful weapons. In his time no man excelled Drona in the use of the bow, in the hurling of the spear and the wielding of the mace. From the home of Rama on the slopes of the Himalayas he made his way to the capital of the Panchala country to offer his services to the Raja Drupada, with whom he had played as a child in the hermitage of the sage Bharadwaja. But when Drona stood before the Raja and said : ' I am Drona, the friend of your boyhood ', Drupada, who had grown arrogant and vain, replied : ' What is this talk of friendship ? There can be no friendship between the poor and the rich ; one who is not a king cannot have a king for his friend. I came as a child to your illustrious father's hut to study the Vedas and I knew you then as a playmate. Begone ! You can be no friend of mine. ' Drona was very angry and a desire for revenge on the proud king burned in his heart. Taking his weapons, he went to Hastinapura. There Bhishma welcomed him gladly, for his fame was great ;

and he became the tutor of the young princes in all feats of arms.

Day by day the lads were taught by him to draw the bow and to fight with mace, sword, spear, lance and dart, from horseback, on foot, in cars and mounted on elephants. One day Drona called his pupils together and told them that he had a special purpose in teaching them to be great fighters, and he asked them to vow that, when they were skilled, they would carry out his wishes. The boys were puzzled and frightened and hung their heads in silence. But Prince Arjuna swore that he would do anything to please his master. So it came about that Arjuna was Drona's favourite pupil and he taught him to be a wonderful bowman. At archery he excelled all the other boys. But in muscle Bhima was the strongest of all the princes. With the mace he was the equal of six of them. Duryodhana was skilled also in the use of this weapon, but he was no match for Bhima whom he grew to hate more and more.

When the boys had grown to early manhood and had all become skilful, Drona asked Maharaja Dhritarashtra

Drona holds an assault-at-arms. to permit him to hold an assault-at-arms that the lads might show their skill. So a field of great size was

chosen where there were no trees. On it was built for the king and court a stage splendidly adorned with gold and rich hangings and spread with silken carpets. All around the enclosure were set up the tents of the chiefs and the platforms with seats for the people. When all the preparations had been made, a day was fixed for the assault-at-arms. When the morning came, the galleries and the platforms and the trees surrounding the tournament field were hung with flags of various colours and long garlands

of flowers. Lamenting that he could not see the skill and valour of his sons and nephews, Dhritarashtra was led into the arena by Bhishma, escorted by his ministers in stately procession. On his right hand sat Bhishma. On his left was Vidura who described to him all that took place. In a splendid pavilion set apart for them the Rani Kunti and Gandhari with their ladies-in-waiting took their seats. With blasts of their trumpets the heralds summoned the people, and amid the clashing of cymbals, the beating of drums and the blowing of conchs a vast crowd of the citizens of Hastinapura and of people from all parts of the kingdom gathered together on the platforms and around the barriers of the field to witness the tournament.

When all was ready, Drona and his son Aswatthaman clothed in pure white garments entered the arena. They were followed by Yudhishtira and the princes in the order of age. Each prince carried his bow and arrows in his hand. When Drona had offered up prayers to the gods, the lads each in turn embraced the feet of their teacher and then ranged themselves round him, awaiting his command to begin.

The first display was one of archery. Each of the princes in turn showed his skill by shooting at targets,

first on foot, then mounted on horses,  
on elephants and finally from swiftly  
driven chariots. Loud were the  
shouts of praise from the people as

The fight be-  
tween Bhima and  
Duryodhana.

the lads showed their skill. Then followed fights with sword and buckler. Next all the princes, first on foot and then mounted as before on horses and elephants or standing in cars, exhibited their skill in archery while running, galloping or driving round the arena at full speed. Next, there were car races and fights from the backs of elephants. Then, dismounting, the princes

gave exhibitions of swordsmanship, fighting with sword and dagger, with dart and lance, and leaping around the arena in a manner to delight the crowd who marvelled at the grace, strength and beauty of the young princes. After this the young men fought with clubs. Chief of these contests was that between Bhima and Duryodhana who were both skilled in the use of the mace. Clad in armour, they battered at each other till the arena rang with the sound of the blows. Then it was that the ill blood between the two families was shown, for what had begun as a friendly struggle soon became a real fight. Fiercely they attacked each other till it was clear to all the onlookers that they were fighting in earnest. Quick to understand, the crowd became excited. Some shouted for Bhima, some for the evil-hearted Duryodhana. An uproar ensued and, urged on by the cries of their partisans, the princes fought like tigers or wild elephants, dealing each other smashing blows on helmet and armour. At last, by order of the Maharaja, Drona parted the two princes and the contest was stopped.

Then, stepping into the middle of the arena, Drona announced that Arjuna would show his skill with the bow. When the young prince in shining gold armour with his bow and sheaf of arrows entered the lists, he looked as handsome as one of the gods. A shout of welcome like thunder rose from the mighty throng. 'See', they cried, 'the graceful son of Kunti!' 'Behold the hero bowman of the Pandavas! It is mighty Indra come to earth.' 'Welcome, kingly boy, welcome!' At these cries of welcome the heart of Kunti was filled with pride and joy, and all was excitement as Arjuna made ready his bow. Then,

Arjuna gives an exhibition of archery.



mounting a chariot, he was driven swiftly around the enclosure, while he shot his arrows right and left at targets with such quickness and skill that all the spectators were astonished. Then he exhibited his skill with the sword, performing feats that had never before been witnessed. Next he took his *chakra* and whirled it at various objects without missing one. Lastly, armed with a lasso, he threw the rope with such skill that he brought down each time the horse, deer or other animal at which he aimed it. Then, mounted and on foot, Arjuna showed his skill in shooting at marks which no one else could hit. Five shafts he sent into the mouth of a moving iron boar and twenty-one into the hollow of a cow's horn hung on a pole by a rope swinging in the wind. Then, after embracing the feet of Drona, the young hero withdrew from the arena amid the deafening applause of the onlookers.

While the cheering continued and Duryodhana looked on with jealous rage, a young warrior strode into the lists, striking his thighs and clapping his hands noisily as wrestlers do before a fight. This was

The quarrel between Karna and Arjuna.

Karna, the son of a charioteer from the Anga country, a youth famous for his feats of arms. A splendid figure clad in shining armour, he walked haughtily forward to where Drona stood surrounded by the five Pandavas. Addressing Arjuna in a loud voice, he said: 'Arjuna, you have shown your skill with bow and sword. It is my turn now, and I swear that I will perform all your feats better than you have done.' At this challenge Arjuna was very angry and made no answer. But Duryodhana, glad to see his haughty cousins humiliated, welcomed the new-comer warmly and called out loudly that he must be allowed to compete. The crowd roared their applause and,

Drona having given his permission, Karna performed all the feats that Arjuna had done. Great was the excitement among the spectators, for few had recognized the stranger, and they stood up calling for his name. Duryodhana was delighted. He came forward, eagerly congratulating Karna and calling him 'brother'. At this honour Karna became more arrogant than before and, going towards Arjuna, he shouted: 'I have kept my word and done all that you did. If you still think that you are my superior, let us prove who is the better in fair fight.'

Burning with rage, Arjuna cried: 'You shall pay for this insult with your life. Who are you that you should force your way into these lists uninvited?'

'These lists', retorted Karna, 'are not for you only, Arjuna. I have as much right to be here to compete as you. But do not let us wrangle any more. Prove yourself the better of us two in open fight, if you can. If you dare to accept my challenge, I promise you that I will teach you manners and disgrace and defeat you before your teacher. With bows will we fight and with arrows will I strike off your head.'

When he heard these bold words, Drona was very angry and he cried out: 'Arjuna, you have my permission to fight. It is not right that you should bear such insults any longer.'

Arjuna stepped down into the arena surrounded by his brothers and Karna came forward with Duryodhana and his brothers supporting him. It was obvious that in another moment the tournament ground would be changed into a real battle field and that the hatred existing between the cousins would end in bloodshed. At this moment one Kripa, a kinsman of the royal

Duryodhana  
takes Karna's part.  
The assembly  
breaks up in dis-  
order.

house, interfered. Addressing Karna, he said : ' You have challenged Arjuna to fight. He is the son of Maharaja Pandu, and before you can fight him you must tell us who are your father and mother that we may judge whether it is right that Arjuna should meet you in battle. '

At this there was a general murmur of approval ; but Karna hung his head and made no answer, for his father was only a charioteer. Eager to see Arjuna defeated, Duryodhana said : ' What does his birth matter ? The greatness of a hero lies in his strength, not in his ancestry. But if it be a matter of rank, I will ask my father to appoint Karna ruler of the Anga country. ' At this he ordered a throne to be brought that Karna might forthwith be installed. When the golden seat was brought, Duryodhana led Karna to it and seating him on it, went to his father's throne. Bowing before Dhritarashtra, he begged that Karna might be given the title of ruler of Anga. At this moment Adhiratha, father of Karna, the old charioteer, entered the enclosure leaning on a staff. When he saw his son seated on a golden chair in the midst of the great assembly, he went joyfully towards him. Rising from his chair, and laying aside his bow and arrows, Karna hastened to the old man and embraced his feet. At this sight the Pandavas laughed scornfully and Bhima cried out : ' Ho ! you carter's son, how dare you challenge Arjuna to fight ? You are not fit to be matched with such as he. Even death at his hands would be too great an honour for you. Get a whip instead of a bow and follow your father's calling. ' Angrily Karna retorted and a great tumult began. Swords were drawn and some of the crowd called out, ' Let them fight ', while others shouted that Karna should be expelled from the enclosure. The

uproar increased : the cries of the frightened women and the angry shouts of the men mingled with the excited exclamations of the crowd eager to see the duel. But the Maharaja ordered the princes to put up their weapons. Drona and others stepped between the combatants and parted them. By this time the light was failing, for it was nearly sunset. The assembly broke up in confusion, the Maharaja and the court being much troubled at what had occurred, and the crowd being disappointed of the fight that they had hoped to witness. Karna left the enclosure being embraced and greeted warmly by Duryodhana and his brothers ; while the Pandavas, full of indignation, went to their palace. Thus the feud between the two families grew ever more bitter.

Drona thought that the time had now come for his revenge on Raja Drupada, and he told his pupils to get ready for war. The armies of the Kauravas were prepared and marched against the kingdom of Panchala.

The war with the Panchalas.  
At their head rode Duryodhana and his brothers. Arjuna said to his brothers ' Let us wait. They will not conquer and capture Drupada. When they are defeated, then we will advance. ' And it happened as he said. The Panchalas came out of their city with a large army and after a fierce battle routed Duryodhana, Karna and their soldiers. When they saw their cousins retreating, the Pandavas began to fight. Arjuna and Bhima drove down upon the Panchala ranks slaying scores. With his mace Bhima killed many elephants, splitting open their skulls ; and he drove before him the cars of the Panchala chiefs. Arjuna drove straight towards Drupada, who with his chief general Satyajit gave battle to the young prince. Placing himself before the Raja Satyajit replied to the fierce flight of Arjuna's

arrows by rushing desperately at him. With his first arrow Arjuna split his bow in two and with a second arrow he struck Satyajit to the ground. Then, leaping from his car, sword in hand, he sprang on the Raja's car. Killing the charioteer and the horses, he seized Drupada as a hawk grips a snake. When the Panchala soldiers saw their general wounded and their Raja a prisoner, they fled in disorder pursued by the Pandava army. But Bhima and Arjuna forbade their troops to loot the city or to massacre the people, and so the battle ended.

Then the Pandavas marched back to Hastinapura taking Drupada to Drona. When the latter saw the Raja thus humbled, he praised his pupils who had rewarded him so loyally for the trouble which he had taken to teach them to fight. To Drupada he said: 'Have no fear for your life. I do not wish to kill you: I only wish for your friendship which once you so rudely refused. Your kingdom and your liberty are lost. But out of my goodness of heart towards you I give you the latter and of your kingdom I restore half to you. Half I will keep, for I desire your friendship and I remember that you said that none but a king could be a king's friend.' Drupada thanked his generous foe in words, but in his heart he hated him and from that day he schemed how he could take his revenge and conquer Drona.

This war was the first of many successful campaigns waged by the Pandavas, and it made the rivalry between the Kauravas and the Pandavas more bitter, for the former were naturally very jealous of their cousins' victory. Dhritarashtra wished to do what was just. Therefore, though naturally he loved his sons more than his nephews, he thought that the eldest son

Dhritarashtra's  
growing jealousy  
of the Pandavas.

of Pandu should be king, and he installed Yudhishtira as Yuvaraja or heir apparent. Yudhishtira was not as skilful a warrior as Bhima or Arjuna, but he was a just and wise ruler, who helped his uncle very much in the work of governing and made himself much beloved by the people. As the leader of his brothers and chief of the army, the young prince conquered and slew Sauvira and the Raja of the Yavanas. Vipula also, long the foe of the Kurus, was defeated and Sumitra and the Rajas of the eastern lands. Thus the dominions of the Kurus were extended and vast booty was brought by the Pandavas to Hastinapura. But their success and the love and loyalty shown to them by the people made Duryodhana and his brothers hate them and fear them more and more. They complained bitterly to their father: 'We your sons are scorned and neglected by your subjects. Our cousins grow stronger and more arrogant each day. The people care no more for us; all their talk is of the sons of Pandu.' At last the blind king himself grew jealous of their valour and pride. Slowly he yielded to the evil and envious thoughts till his mind was poisoned against his nephews. The fear of them and anxiety for his own sons' welfare worried him and robbed him of sleep. One day he summoned his trusted minister, Kanika a Brahman of great wisdom, and asked his advice. 'The princes my nephews daily grow in strength and popularity. I am jealous of their power. What do you advise me to do?'

Kanika, who knew that he would lose his post if Yudhishtira became king, told Dhritarashtra that he ought to get rid of his powerful nephews and assure the succession of Duryodhana to his throne; that, though they were Pandu's sons, the Pandavas must now be regarded as enemies. 'An enemy, Maharaja, must always be destroyed; by poison, in battle, by



bribing his allies, by cunning or by fraud he must be defeated and slain. As the jackal in the fable, eager to have the meat of the deer for himself, first got rid of the tiger, then of the mouse and then of the wolf and the mongoose, so you must conquer the timid through their fears, the brave by conciliation and flattery, the avaricious by money and all by your courage and mercilessness. If your friend, your brother, your son, your father, or even your teacher, becomes your enemy, if you desire prosperity you must kill him without scruple. The dead can never cause trouble or fear. Therefore, Maharaja, do not be faint-hearted. Protect yourself and your sons from these sons of Pandu who are stronger than their cousins and who are winning the love of the people. That is my advice. If you do not listen to it, your sons will become outcasts. By speedy and stern measures remove the Pandavas from your path.'

These words of Kanika deeply affected the king's mind and he became very sad. Meanwhile the Pandavas

became more and more popular.

Dhritarashtra weakly yields to the plot of banishment.

The citizens praised the bravery of the princes and openly expressed the wish that Yudhishtira should be their king. 'Dhritarashtra,' they said, 'is growing old. He is not really king. The venerable Bhishma can never reign because of his vow. It is time, therefore, that Pandu's noble son, the illustrious Yudhishtira, should ascend the throne of his father. He will do justice and aided by his heroic brothers he will maintain the glory of the house of Bharata.' Of all this talk Duryodhana heard through his spies and in great distress he went to his father. 'This and this the people are saying about you,' he told the king. 'They plan to rebel and place my cousin on the throne. We

your sons will be outcasts despised by all, living on the goodwill and charity of the Pandavas, and our children and children's children will be robbed of their inheritance, for the crown will descend in Pandu's line generation after generation. Father, act now so that we may not be homeless wanderers.'

The Maharaja listened sadly. He was half inclined to yield to his son's and Kanika's advice. But, recalling his brother's affection, he said: 'Your uncle was always a loving brother to me, giving me all, even his kingdom. Shall I reward his love so? His sons are worthy of their brave father. Yudhishtira is so noble-hearted, just and wise that I cannot pass over his claims to his father's throne. Even if I banish him and his brothers, is it not certain that the people who love them for their virtues and their bravery will rise against us and kill us all?'

'I know that you love dearly my uncle's memory', Duryodhana replied, 'and that you are most unwilling to act harshly towards his children. But see how great is the danger to us. Either we or the Pandavas must be destroyed. If we act resolutely, the crowd can be won over by money and honours. The wealth of the kingdom is in your hands, and you can use it to bribe the rebellious. On some friendly pretext or by some trick banish my cousins; when I have been installed as Yuvaraja, they can return then. Let them go to Varanavata. If you act firmly, Bhishma, Vidura, Drona and all will accept your decision. Act quickly, for only thus can you cure the anxiety that makes my life a misery to me. If you prefer Yudhishtira to me and refuse to give me the throne, I shall kill myself.'

The old blind king who loved Duryodhana very much weakly yielded. Praying that he might be forgiven for his unnatural act, he told his son to

make the necessary preparations, for he was resolved to banish his nephews.

When he heard this, Duryodhana was very glad ; and with the help of Karna and his brothers he tried

to win over the people by gifts of money and lavish entertainments and feasts. Moreover, a plot was made to persuade the Pandavas to go to

Varanavata of their own accord. Those ministers

and others at court who were friendly with Duryodhana urged them, now that their triumphs after their victories had been celebrated in Hastinapura, to go to Varanavata to delight the people with a sight of the national heroes. After a while these schemers spoke before the Maharaja when the Pandavas were present. 'It is the time of the Siva festival : our glorious heroes should show themselves to their father's subjects in the fine city of Varanavata.' Hearing these words, Dhritarashtra said : ' Surely that is wisely said. It is well that the people of Varanavata should see the heir to the throne. Go, my children. It is the season of festival and you will enjoy yourselves. When you wish, return here. It is well. Go at once.'

As he heard his uncle's words, Yudhishtira understood that Dhritarashtra desired to drive them from the throne, but he did not protest. He knew that he was almost alone save for his brothers, that the powerful chiefs were jealous of him or afraid of Duryodhana and that his enemies were buying the allegiance of the people. So he bowed low before his uncle and Bhishma and embraced their feet, saying : 'By order of Dhritarashtra we will go to Varanavata.' Immediately he and his brothers made preparations for their departure.

Duryodhana had not dared to tell his father the

wicked thought that was in his head when he persuaded him to banish his cousins. He did not intend to be content with their banishment; he meant to kill them all. So now he summoned a low caste man named Purochana, a confidential servant of his. 'The Maharaja', he said, 'has banished the Pandavas to Varanavata that I may be king. Obey my orders and I will reward you with great wealth. Take swift mules and go to Varanavata and build for my cousins a palace which can be quickly burned. Build it of goodly proportions and furnish it with costly hangings and furniture, so that none shall suspect its purpose. But let the wood be soaked in oil and ghee and between the boards of the walls put lac and resin, hemp and fats, so that the house may be burnt down in a few hours when it is set on fire. Let no man know of your plan; but, when all is prepared, invite the princes to live in the palace. Then some night, when they are sleeping, fasten all the doors and burn them to death.' Having received these orders Purochana mounted a swift car, and went to Varanavata.

When the people of Hastinapura heard that Dhritarashtra had ordered the Pandavas to go to

Varanavata, they murmured against the Maharaja saying: 'What wickedness is Dhritarashtra planning? He wishes to banish Prince Yudhishtira

and his brothers so that the evil-hearted Duryodhana shall reign over us. We will not consent. We will leave our homes and go with the sons of Pandu.' So great crowd gathered round the chariots of the princes as they started out and the people shouted, 'Blessings on Yudhishtira, our rightful king! We will defend the sons of Maharaja Pandu.' When Yudhishtira saw that the people were rebellious, he spoke to them, 'If you love

The Pandavas discover the plot to kill them.

us truly, speak not against the Maharaja whom we all must obey. Bless us if you will; but, having wished us godspeed, return to your homes and honour the king.' So the crowd ceased to follow the chariots. But Vidura accompanied his nephews to the gate of the city. When they had reached it, he drew Yudhishtira aside and spoke to him secretly in *mleccha* language: 'He who knows the plot of his foe can take measures to defeat it. There are other deadly weapons besides those made of steel. He does not die who knows that fire cannot destroy those living in holes in the ground. He who is threatened by fire can escape if his house is like the jackal's, having many doors.' And Yudhishtira said: 'I have understood;' and his uncle blessed them and departed.

After travelling for some days the Pandavas and Kunti reached Varanavata. The citizens in cars and carriages of all kinds came out many miles to greet the princes and amid the joyful notes of drum and trumpet they marched into the city. For days there were feasts and plays and public celebrations. During this time Purochana was busy building the palace of lac. To his brothers and mother Yudhishtira had told the truth disclosed to him by Vidura, but they decided that they would show no suspicion. After ten days Purochana came to them and, bowing low, invited them to the palace he had prepared for them. It was a splendid building and they went at once as if they suspected nothing. They admired the beautiful furniture and the costly curtains and carpets and thanked him for all he had done. But when they were alone they examined the walls and discovered that they were filled with lac, hemp, resins and straw soaked in oil; but they had been plastered over so skilfully that it looked like an ordinary house. Then they discussed

what it was best to do. The advice of Yudhishtira was that they must continue to pretend that they suspected nothing. If Purochana thought that they knew of his plot, he would set fire to the palace at once. If he believed that they knew nothing, he would wait for some days, and that would give them time to plan escape. This advice was adopted and the princes spent their time hunting in the district that they might learn their way through the woods in which they knew that they must at last take refuge. They also resolved at once to dig a passage under the palace leading to the forest.

After a few days a messenger came from Vidura. He was a man experienced in mining and he said to

Yudhishtira: 'In fourteen nights, when there is no moon, Purochana will burn the palace. The Lord Vidura

The escape of the Pandavas. sent me, saying: Go and protect the Pandavas. To you, prince, he spoke in *mleccha* language. I was to tell you this that you may be certain that I speak the truth and am your friend.' Then, under the direction of this engineer, the Pandavas worked hard and in a few days they had dug a passage far into the woods. It opened in the centre of the main hall of the palace and they carefully concealed the mouth with boards over which carpets were spread. Purochana suspected nothing; but he was always on the watch, waiting for the night when he could carry out his orders and burn the princes. Night after night the five brothers slept with their weapons by their side; day after day they hunted in the neighbouring forests. Purochana was certain that they knew nothing and the citizens had no suspicion of the tragedy that was preparing in their midst.

At last one day Yudhishtira called together his brothers and said: 'The cruel *mleccha* thinks that we



are deceived. His mind is at ease. Now is our chance. Let us set fire to the palace and escape, burning the wretch to death.' So when all was arranged, Kunti gave a feast to the Brahmans and many of the people of the city came. Purochana was there and he drank and ate gluttonously, so that by midnight he was sleeping soundly as drunken men do in his room in the palace. Then close to that part of the building Bhima set fire to the wood work. Afterwards in several places the princes lit the house of lac; and, while the high wind quickly blew the palace into a furnace, with their mother they escaped down the underground passage and out into the forest. When the glare of the flames and the roar of the fire awoke the citizens, they came out into the streets wailing and wringing their hands. 'That low caste wretch Purochana has killed the princes. There is no doubt that he was sent here to destroy them by order of that evil-minded prince Duryodhana. Woe to the house of Dhritarashtra. Cursed be he who has done this wicked deed!' The flames were so fierce that they could not approach the palace; but, when the morning came, they searched the smouldering ruins. They found the charred body of Purochana and they were glad that his sin had been so punished. But the bodies of the Pandavas and Kunti they could not find; nor did they see the passage, the entrance to which was choked up with ashes. 'See', they cried; 'how thoroughly the cruel wretch had done his work. So much oil, resin and grease poured from the burning walls of the royal apartments that even the bones have been destroyed. Purochana must have lingered too long to see the completion of his cruel deed and became overpowered by smoke and so met his death. Praise be to God that he is dead! But woe to the

house of Bharata that has lost such noble princes ! Truly has its glory departed !' When the news reached Hastinapura, the weak old Maharaja saw how he had lent himself to evil, though he did not know that Duryodhana had plotted the fire. He cried aloud and lamented his brother's sons. Prayers were said and sacrifices offered and the public mourning lasted many days. But Vidura only pretended to mourn for his nephews, for he knew that they still lived.

When they left the burning palace and fled to the woods, the Pandavas hoped to get far from the town before the dawn. Carrying their

The adventures  
of the Pandavas in  
the forest.

mother in turn, they pressed on through the thick tangled woods, breaking trees and tearing the lianas

that obstructed their pathway. But they were weary and thirsty and the forest was very dense. Soon they lost their way and, hungry and sleepy, they sat down in the darkness. Kunti was very thirsty and she reproached her sons for not getting her some water. Telling them to rest under a great banian tree, Bhima went on ahead to find water. After tearing his way through the jungle for some miles he came to a lake in which many water-fowl swam and dived, filling the silent night with their harsh or plaintive cries. Bhima bathed and drank deep of the cool water. Then, filling a large gourd, he started to go back. When he reached the banian, he found Kunti and his brothers asleep on the bare ground. Enraged at the cruel fate that had overtaken them, he sat down by their side and gave way to his indignation in angry words. 'What cruel fate is ours that the queen my mother, wife of the famous Pandu, accustomed to palaces, should sleep here on the ground, that Yudhishtira, the rightful heir to the kingdom of the

Kurus, should be a beggar in these woods. Curses be on jealous and evil-minded relatives who have brought us to this! Banished by the weak Dhritarashtra, we have escaped with difficulty from the fire with which his wicked son planned to kill us. Sons of Dhritarashtra, for the time your evil desires are satisfied. Forlorn and hungry we are here in the woods. Make the most of your triumph. You will live only so long as Yudhishtira does not order me to slay you. Patient and noble-hearted, he controls his anger, or this day I would send you and Karna and your rogue of an uncle Sakuni to the regions of Yama.' Pressing his great hands together as if he felt within their grip the throats of his foes, the mighty Bhima sat there watching over his sleeping mother and brothers, guarding the gourd of water with which they might quench their thirst when they awoke.

Close to the tree beneath which were the Pandavas lived a rakshasa named Hidimva. He was a foul red-

Bhima destroys  
the Rakshasa  
Hidimva.

haired creature with vast pot-bellied body and powerful long arms. His eyes were cruel and bloodshot, his teeth long and sharp, his matted red beard and long hair framed a face dreadful to behold. This demon lived in a tree and waited for men upon whose flesh he eagerly feasted. For many days he had eaten no one and he was very hungry. So when he woke and smelt human beings, he stretched his great hairy arms and shook his sister who slept on the tree. 'Wake up', he said, 'I smell men. They are sheltering beneath the big banian, I think. Go and kill these intruders into my forest. Long have I fasted. Now my mouth is moist at the thought of human flesh. Tearing open their throats, I will drink long draughts of foaming blood. Then together we

will feast on their flesh, tearing it from the bones. Kill them quickly and bring them here.' Climbing down, his sister silently crept to where the Pandavas slept with Bhima sitting as guard over them. When she saw him, she thought that she had never seen so handsome a man and she fell instantly in love with him. Changing her shape to that of a lovely girl, she showed herself to him asking who he and the sleepers were. 'This forest is the domain of my brother, the rakshasa Hidimva. He has sent me here to kill you, but I desire you as my husband. Let me aid you and these to escape before my brother knows of my treachery.'

'Rakshasa woman', replied Bhima, 'I desire neither your love nor your protection. I do not fear your foul brood. Let your brother come here and I will kill him before your eyes.' But the female demon pleaded: 'You are strong; but mere mortals cannot fight with rakshasas. My brother will certainly kill you all. Listen to me. I will protect you and carry you out of this wood.' But Bhima simply said: 'Let your brother come. He must defeat me before he can kill these dear ones of mine'. Meanwhile, surprised at his sister's delay, Hidimva climbed down from his tree and came striding through the forest, his strong arms breaking trees in his path, his huge hairy body quivering with rage. When he came near and saw Bhima and his sister, his red eyes shone like fire with anger. 'Insolent man', he cried, 'who are you who have dared to trespass into my forest? First I will kill you and all these people, and then I will tear my sister to pieces for her treachery.'

'Boast not, cannibal fiend', said Bhima, 'but fight me. I will send you to-day to the realms of Yama. I will pound your head to pieces and leave your foul

limbs for the vultures, hawks and jackals to devour as carrion.'

'Fool,' cried Hidimva. 'First I will kill you and drink your blood. Then I will kill these brothers of yours.'

With a yell of rage he rushed at Bhima who gripped him in a vice-like grasp. Backwards and forwards the two swayed in their deadly struggle. Dragging each other hither and thither, their curses and cries echoed through the dark forest. The noise woke the Pandavas. Springing to their feet, the brothers saw Bhima and the rakshasa locked in each other's arms, fighting with the rage of two mad elephants, and the female rakshasa, lovely in her disguise, standing close to them. Seeing that they were awake she cried: 'My brother the cannibal Hidimva who had sent me to kill you all will kill your brother. Come and help him. He will kill him, he will kill him.'

Arjuna ran to help Bhima, but Bhima called out: 'Come no nearer, brother. I need no help. This monster shall die before your eyes.' 'Be quick then', Arjuna said, 'for the sky is reddening with the light of dawn when rakshasas grow stronger. Kill him quickly.' Hearing his brother's words, Bhima put forth all his vast strength and lifting Hidimva high in the air flung him with such force to the ground that the rakshasa's bones were smashed. Then, kneeling on the body, he bent it double breaking it in two as a woodman breaks a faggot of wood on his knee. Dusty and bloodstained, the angry Bhima would have killed the female rakshasa also; but Yudhishtira, ever just, bade him spare her, for to her they had owed the warning of her brother's intention to kill them all. So Bhima spared her, and with Kunti the princes hastened to the lake where they bathed and quenched their thirst.

With the dawn the Pandavas, taking it in turn to carry their mother, wandered on through the forest, fearful of being pursued by their enemies. Their food was the meat of the animals they killed and the fruits and roots of the jungle. Their

The Pandavas reach the town of Ekachakra.

dress was of bark and the skins of deer and their hair was long and tangled like that of *sanyasis*. For months the heroes lived in the woods like beggars or *rishis*, sleeping beneath trees. Sometimes they marched long distances; at other times they hid for days in the depths of the forest. In this disguise they travelled through the kingdoms of the Matsyas, the Trigartas, the Panchalas and the Kichakas, and no one recognized the sons of Pandu. At last, by the advice of a *rishi* whom they met they walked to the town of Ekachakra where they found shelter in the house of a Brahman and lived by begging.

In the wood near Ekachakra there lived a rakshasa by the name of Vaka. He was fond of human flesh and he was the terror of the district. But he protected the people from other demons and in return he had made an agreement with the inhabitants that he would assure them their safety, on the condition that at certain times each year they sent him two buffaloes, a cartload of rice and a human being. Whoever it was that drove the buffaloes with the cart, man or woman, girl or boy, him or her he ate. Each household took it in turn to fulfil this cruel bargain. It happened one day while only Bhima and Kunti were in the house that they heard loud weeping in the Brahman's room. Kunti went to ask what was the matter and found the Brahman, his wife and daughter all crying and beating their breasts. They explained that it was now their turn to feed Vaka. If the Brahman sacrificed himself,



they wailed, what would become of his family, and he said: 'I will not give my wife or daughter. If we fail, Vaka will come and eat us all. There is only one thing for us to do: we will all go and thus die together.' Then Kunti, relying on the marvellous strength of Bhima, said: 'Do not cry. I will send my son with the rice and buffaloes.' But the Brahman said, 'No, to save my life I will not sacrifice the life of a Brahman and a guest.'

The Brahman had a son about four years old. When the little fellow saw his father and mother crying and heard about Vaka, he seized a pointed blade of grass from a bundle lying near. Armed with this, he ran to his father, saying: 'Do not cry any more. I will kill the demon with this spear.' Even in the midst of their sorrow they were all obliged to laugh at the child waving his grass spear. Then Kunti reassured the Brahman. 'Have no fear,' she said. 'My son will come to no harm. On the contrary, he will kill Vaka and save all the townsfolk.'

So it was arranged, and on the proper date Bhima started out at night driving the buffaloes yoked to the cart filled with rice. When he was close to Vaka's den, he began to call him loudly by name, at the same time eating some of the rice. When the demon heard Bhima, he came striding through the forest and great was his anger when he saw Bhima calmly eating the food sent for him. 'Who are you, insolent fool, who calls me and eats my food before my eyes?' Bhima said nothing: he only laughed in contempt and continued his meal. Trembling with rage, the huge demon rushed upon Bhima, tearing up a tree as weapon. Bhima also tore up a tree, and thus the two fought for some minutes dealing each other terrible blows. Then,

Bhima fights and  
kills Vaka.

at last throwing away the trees, they wrestled. Vaka was very strong and his arms were like steel. Bhima seized him round the throat and dragged him down till he got his knee on his chest. Holding him so, he struck the demon again and again in the face till it was a bloody pulp. Then, as the rakshasa's strength failed, Bhima lifted up his body and with a mighty effort bent it double. Vomitting blood and roaring in his agony, Vaka died. The cries of Vaka attracted other rakshasas to the spot. But when they saw Vaka's corpse, they fled and never again molested the people of that district. Dragging the body towards the city, Bhima left it outside the gate, and returned to the Brahman's house. At dawn when the people came out of the town, they were astonished to see the mangled corpse of Vaka. Soon the good news spread that in some way the Brahman, whose turn it was to feed the demon, had rescued the people from Vaka's cruelty. But when they went to his house eager to learn how he had done it, he told them that a Brahman skilled in *mantras* had seen him sad and weeping and had offered to take the food to Vaka. No doubt it was this holy man who had conquered the rakshasa. This he said at Kunti's request, for she feared that, if it were known that Bhima had killed Vaka, the princes would be recognized by the people of Ekachakra.

Now there had been born to Drupada, Raja of the Panchalas, a lovely daughter and she had grown to be a maiden of such wondrous beauty that every king desired her for his wife. So large and black were her eyes, so slender her waist, so delicately shaped her exquisite limbs that she seemed to rival the fabled glories of the goddess Lakshmi herself. Fairest of all mortals was she ; and

The Pandavas go  
to the *swayamvara*  
of Princess  
Draupadi.

when she was of age, her father announced that he would hold her *swayamvara*; and he invited all the kings and princes to his capital city for the ceremony. The news reached Ekachakra, and Kunti said: 'My sons, let us go to Kampilya, the city of the Panchalas. Perhaps you will win the princess as wife.' So they journeyed towards Kampilya, and on the road they met Brahmans and rishis from various lands and actors, bards, dancers and athletes all going there. No one recognized the Pandavas dressed in the shabby clothes of beggars, and they travelled unnoticed in the crowd to the city where they obtained lodging in the house of a potter.

When it was known that the *swayamvara* of the beautiful Draupadi was to be held, many princely suitors came to Kampilya. In splendid chariots and on gorgeously caparisoned elephants the rulers of the land arrived attended by their courtiers in jewels and gold and by retinues of gallant men-at-arms on proudly prancing horses. Drupada welcomed his royal guests with princely hospitality, and the city was gay with decorations and filled with the joyful sounds of trumpets and music. Outside the city a large enclosure had been marked out surrounded by high barriers. Round it were erected stages of seats canopied with many coloured silks and carpeted with soft rugs. Pavilions of white and gold, the walls gleaming with jewels and the ceilings bright with garlands of flowers, were built round the arena for the royal guests. The floors of the spacious rooms were spread with costly cloths and in each apartment the air was perfumed with the burning of sweet-smelling woods.

Raja Drupada was grieved at the death of the Pandavas, for he had always desired to give his daughter to the great archer Arjuna. Thinking of him

and hoping that the news of his death might yet prove to be false, Drupada had had a bow made so big and stout that only the strongest and most skilful bowman would be able to bend it. Then he set up a tall iron pillar on the top of which was fixed a golden fish. Beneath the fish a wheel was made to whirl round continually. Drupada announced that whoever could string and bend the bow and hit the fish's eye through the turning wheel should be the husband of Draupadi. Then the heralds blew a summons on their silver trumpets and the suitors, the Brahmans and the crowd of spectators gathered in the enclosure. For sixteen days there were tournaments and sports, and the royal suitors showed their skill with sword and spear and mace, in horsemanship and in chariot races.

At last the morning of the *swayamvara* came. Once more the heralds sounded the summons and a great crowd collected within the barriers. In that vast assembly all the princes of Hindustan were represented.

The princes try to bend the bow. Duryodhana and his brothers with Karna were there; their uncles Sakuni, Sauvala and Vrishaka, sons of the Raja of Gandhara; the Raja of Madra and his son; the sovereigns of Kalinga and Pattana; the Rajas of Karusha and Kosala, and many more princes and chiefs sat in splendour around the amphitheatre. No one noticed the Pandavas who took their places among the Brahmans, dressed in the poor clothes of *sadhus*. When all had taken their seats, Raja Drupada led in the lovely Draupadi. In her hand she held a golden dish on which lay the garland for the neck of him who should be chosen to be her husband. Holding her hand, the Raja in a loud voice declared that he would give her as wife to him who could string and bend the bow and shoot the eye of the fish

through the whirling wheel. A great shout of approval rose from the royal suitors, and the princes in their glittering armour, their ears adorned with jewelled rings, drew and waved their swords, saluting Draupadi. Eager to win her, they glared jealously at one another, and one after another they descended into the arena to try their fortune with the bow.

Duryodhana, Salya, the Rajas of Kalinga and Banga, the ruler of Videha, the chief of the Yavanas and many others, the sons and grandsons of monarchs, with straining muscles and heaving breasts tried to bend the bow. Some even were thrown to the ground by the recoil of the stout wood which yielded slightly to their efforts and then sprang back bruising their hands and disordering their clothes and ornaments. Then Karna came forward. Seizing the bow, he bent it and fixed an arrow to the string. But the proud Draupadi said: 'I will not have a Suta for my lord.' So, angrily throwing down the bow, Karna strode back to his seat. Next came Sisupala, the Raja of the Chedis, but he was on his knees in a minute from the recoil of the bow. So also was Raja Jarasandha of Magadha who indignantly gave up the effort and left the amphitheatre. Last came the monarch of Madra, and he also could not string or bend the mighty bow.

Then a great shout of wonder and derision rose from the crowded tiers of seats. The people laughed loudly at the vain efforts of the princes. In all that vast assembly it seemed there was no one who would prove himself worthy of the beautiful Draupadi. When the mocking laughter ceased, there was silence for some minutes, every one looking at his neighbour in surprise. Then from among the Brahmans Arjuna

Arjuna shoots  
the eye of the fish.

stepped out. When they saw this poor young Brahman, as they thought, walk quietly forward towards the bow, the spectators were amazed. Some laughed in scorn and some cried out in anger. The Brahmans also were divided. Some said, 'Who is this youth who would match himself against all the greatest Kshatriyas? He will bring derision on our order.' Others declared, 'What is there that a Brahman cannot do? The boy has mighty limbs and muscles. He seems to have as much strength as he has self-confidence. Pray that he may bend the bow and bring honour to us all.' In breathless silence all watched Arjuna as he seized the bow and strung it in a minute. Then, taking the five arrows, he shot them one after the other through the whirling wheel, piercing the eye of the fish each time. Immediately the place was in confusion. The crowds clapped their hands and cheered; the angry kings and princes drew their swords and leapt from their seats; the Brahmans shouted out in joy; while the trembling Draupadi gazed lovingly at the splendid youth who still held the bow, eager to place round his neck the garland of her *swayamvara*.

Raja Drupada was alarmed and dismayed. Gently taking his daughter's hand, he led her from the royal pavilion. Meanwhile the enraged suitors left their seats, crying, 'We have been insulted! Did Drupada invite us here to humiliate us? Scorning us his equals, will he give his daughter to a Brahman beggar? That fellow we cannot kill, but on the Raja let us take our revenge.' But Drupada fled with his daughter to his palace, as brandishing their maces and swords the angry Kshatriyas rushed down into the arena. Seeing his brother in danger, Bhima had run



from his seat and, tearing up one of the poles which supported the nearest pavilion, he held it like a club. With the great bow in his hand Arjuna also stood ready to fight. Then the kings and princes, exclaiming that there was no sin in killing a Brahman in battle who desires to fight, rushed on the brothers. Karna rushed on Arjuna; while Salya attacked Bhima. Karna was pierced with an arrow and fainted. Soon recovering, the fight was renewed. The Brahmans gave Arjuna arrows and he defended himself so well that at last Karna cried: 'Who are you? Are you Rama or Indra himself or Indra's younger brother Vishnu? None but Shachi or Arjuna the son of Pandu could defy me.' 'O Karna,' Arjuna replied, 'I am neither Indra nor Rama. I am only a Brahman who is foremost of all bowmen. I will teach you so by conquering you.' When Karna heard these words, he gave up the fight. Meanwhile Bhima and Salya fought like two angry elephants. Dragging each other here and there, they struck with fists and knees, falling and rolling over one another till Bhima lifting his opponent threw him to a distance. Then, seeing Salya fallen and Karna yielding to Arjuna, the princes became alarmed and exclaimed: 'These are no ordinary men. Who is there who can face in fight Karna son of Radha save Rama, Drona or Kiriti son of Pandu? Who can throw in wrestling Salya except the hero Valadeva or Vrikodara son of Pandu? Cease fighting: the maid has been fairly won by this young Brahman.' Then one by one the kings and princes left the arena and prepared to return to their kingdoms, and Arjuna and Bhima and their brothers returned to the potter's house to tell Kunti all that had occurred.

When Raja Drupada, leading his daughter, had

returned to his palace, he was much troubled. 'What is this that has happened?' he said.

Raja Drupada discovers the identity of the Pandavas.

'The princes have gone to their kingdoms angry with me without reason. You, my daughter, have been won by an unknown beggar. Alas! what disgrace has befallen me and my family. Who is he to whom, in fulfilment of my promise, I must surrender you? Is he a Brahman indeed, or is he some Sudra or man of low birth who thus puts his dirty foot on my head?' Thus the Raja mourned over the strange end that had come to the *swayamvara*. Then he called his ministers and naming one whom he could trust, he bade him go into the city and discover who the young bowman was and where he dwelled. Taking attendants, the minister hurried back to the arena, and hearing that the young Brahman had gone by a certain road, he followed quickly and saw him enter the potter's house. After a while he sent a servant to the house to summon the potter. The man, hurrying out and seeing the Raja's minister and his attendants, was terrified and fell on his knees. But the minister, bidding him not to be afraid, as no harm was intended him, said: 'Who are these strangers who live in your house?' The potter replied: 'As the Raja liveth, my lord, I do not know. They are five poor Brahmans and their mother who live by begging. Some days ago they came into the city to witness the *swayamvara*. I know no more.' The minister said: 'The Raja has reason to believe that they are princes in disguise. Hide us now in your house, so that we may watch them and hear their talk.' So the potter hid the Raja's men in an inner room next to that of the Pandavas, and through the cracks of the wall they could see the princes and Kunti. Not knowing that

they were watched, the princes sat at the feet of their mother and told her of Arjuna's success at the *swayamvara* and of the beauty of Draupadi. And Yudhishtira said: 'Go to the palace, Arjuna, and claim your bride.' But Arjuna replied: 'It is not proper that I should marry before you. I have won her: make her your wife.' And Kunti said: 'All that you have, my sons, do you always share. Draupadi shall be the wife of all of you.' And the princes accepted their mother's command. When the minister heard this conversation, he knew that the strangers were no other than the sons of Pandu and he hurried back and told Drupada. 'O Raja, surely has great honour come to your race' he said. 'The Bowman who has won your daughter is Arjuna the son of Pandu. I have seen him and his brothers and Queen Kunti sheltering in a potter's house.'

Then the Raja was very glad and he commanded his ministers to take chariots of gold adorned with lotuses and garlands and drawn by the best horses in his stable and go to the potter's house to bring the five princes and the Queen to the palace.

Raja Drupada  
receives the five  
princes at his  
palace.

So the ministers went there, and saluting the princes and Kunti, they said: 'The Raja, our master, has sent his chariots to carry the husband of his daughter and his relatives to the marriage feast. Mount, we pray you.' Then Yudhishtira and his brothers with Queen Kunti drove to the palace amid the crowds of folks wondering why the Raja should so honour these men in beggars' dress. Drupada had bade his messengers tell the princes nothing of the discovery that had been made, and at the palace he made preparations as if he did not know who his guests were to be. He made ready all those

things necessary for the marriage of each of the four castes. There were fruits and consecrated garlands; armour, shields and swords of fine steel; chariots and horses and battle-axes of gold and bronze and bows and arrows of rare workmanship. Then there were carpets and tapestries and many articles illustrating the handicrafts, and there were cattle and grain and all the tools used in farming. When the Pandavas arrived, he welcomed them heartily and bade them sit on chairs of honour. Just as they were in their deerskins and *sanyasi* dress the five sat on the gilded seats in the order of their age, showing no sign of shyness or fear. When he had saluted them, Drupada commanded a banquet to be spread before them; and, surrounded by him and his court, the princes ate rich food from gold and silver dishes, Bhima eating as much as all his brothers. When their appetites were satisfied, the Raja laid before them the gifts which he had prepared. At the fruits and garlands, the tapestries and farm tools the princes only glanced; but they admired greatly the weapons and armour, the cars and the horses. Then Drupada said: 'My unknown guests, tell me whom am I entertaining? Who is he who has won my daughter as his wife? Are you really Brahmans, or are you gods visiting the earth in disguise? Or are you Kshatriyas? Speak, for it is right that I make preparations proper to your caste for the marriage of your brother.'

Then Yudhishtira replied: 'Raja Drupada, you have honoured those whom it is right and fitting that you should honour. We are the sons of Pandu. I am Yudhishtira. Here is Bhima. There sits Arjuna and there the twins. Within the women's apartments is Queen Kunti.' Then Drupada rejoiced exceedingly and saluted the princes in turn. Surprised

to see them alive, he asked how they had escaped from the fire in the house of lac. Yudhishtira told him the whole story and related their adventures in the forests. Very angry at what he heard Drupada condemned the conduct of Dhritarashtra; and, declaring Duryodhana to be a villain, he swore that he would do all in his power to restore Yudhishtira to his father's throne.

Thereafter preparations were made for the marriage. Drupada set aside a palace for the princes and gave

The marriage of  
Draupadi to the  
Five Princes.

them robes and cloths of fine linen and silk. 'It is a joy to me to have you as my guests. Now let Prince Arjuna with all proper rites take Draupadi for wife.' Then Yudhishtira replied: 'I also must marry.' 'If it please you', Drupada answered, 'take Draupadi yourself as wife or give her to any of your brothers just as you wish.' Yudhishtira replied: 'No, Raja, she shall be the common wife of us all. Such is our custom, to share all in common. That rule of conduct we cannot now abandon.' Raja Drupada said: 'Let it be so'; and forthwith splendid preparations were made for the wedding. To witness it there came many princes and rulers, relatives and friends of Drupada and many Brahmans and citizens. Into the great palace hall hung with garlands of lotuses and lilies, lined by the Raja's soldiers in shining armour, its walls glittering with jewels and gold and precious metals, the Raja brought Draupadi in splendid robes covered with diamonds and pearls and dazzling all eyes with her lustrous youth and beauty. Walking round the sacred fire, blazing high with the consecrated ghee, Draupadi took the hand of each of the princes in turn and became their wife. To his sons-in-law Drupada gave much wealth; cars of gold drawn each by four horses

splendidly harnessed; a hundred elephants each and many slaves male and female with robes and cloths and jewels in profusion. In splendid state the princes lived in the palaces of Raja Drupada, who rejoiced in the possession of such sons-in-law.

The news that the Pandavas were alive and that at the *swayamvara* Arjuna had bent a bow with which no one else could shoot and so had won the lovely Draupadi who had become the wife of the five princes spread quickly. Great was the sur-

The news of the marriage reaches Hastinapura.

prise, for all had thought that the princes and their mother had been burned to death at Varanavata. At Hastinapura the news was at first thought to be false. When Duryodhana and the Kauravas knew that it was true, they were very frightened. They did not know what to do and they took counsel how they should break the news to the Maharaja. Duryodhana was terrified, for he knew well that Bhima would never rest till he had revenge. Their plots had failed, he said, but they must form fresh ones. The Pandavas must be destroyed. But some of the other brothers asked: 'What is the good? Destiny is all powerful. If it be your *karma* to lose the throne, assuredly you will lose it. Why then struggle against fate?'

When Vidura heard the news (which was no news to him) that his nephews still lived and had become the sons-in-law of Raja Drupada, he rejoiced greatly. He went to Dhritarashtra and said: 'Brother, good fortune smiles on the Kauravas! Great is the luck of our house!' Thinking that in this way Vidura was giving him the news that Duryodhana or one other of his sons had won Draupadi, Dhritarashtra exclaimed: 'Praise be to heaven!' Calling his servants, he bade them summon goldsmiths and jewellers that he might



order ornaments for his daughter-in-law. But Vidura said: 'It is not as you think. Our nephews the sons of Pandu still live. They have been discovered in the guise of begging Brahmans in the capital of the Panchalas. There Arjuna won the hand of Draupadi at her *swayamvara*. Therefore I said that good fortune smiles on the Kurus.'

When Dhritarashtra heard these words, he was amazed: 'Can it be as you say, brother? Praise be to God who has spared those goodly youths who are as dear to me as they were to Pandu. Moreover they are now allied to a powerful monarch who has many powerful relatives, so that their strength and influence will help the house of Bharata.' Vidura applauded the Maharaja's words. 'To me', he said, 'it is pleasant to hear you speak thus, for my nephews are very dear to me. When I heard of their deaths, my heart was bowed with grief and shame.'

When they heard the Maharaja thanking heaven that the Pandavas still lived, Duryodhana and his brothers waited till they were alone with him and then they reproached him. 'What is this that you have said? You know, father, that the Pandavas are our deadly foes, that they will eat us all up and seize our inheritance?'

'Before your uncle' Dhritarashtra replied, 'I did not wish to betray my real feelings by a word even or by a movement of the muscles of my face. Tell me now what you advise.' Then Duryodhana explained that there were many methods by which the Pandavas might be destroyed or their power weakened. An attempt might be made to create a quarrel between the three sons of Kunti and the two of Madri; Drupada and his ministers might be bribed to forsake the cause of the

Dhritarashtra  
and his sons consult  
as to what it is best  
to do.

princes ; Draupadi might be set against her husbands ; or Bhima might be secretly killed. That last was the best of all plans, for the Pandavas relied on Bhima. If he were dead, they would abandon any idea of claiming the kingdom. Another method would be to lure them back to Hastinapura and then kill them all. Time was precious. Once they had won over Drupada to their cause their power would be threatening the very existence of Dhritarashtra and all his sons. The king then asked Karna's opinion. Karna said that it was clear to him that all plots against the Pandavas were doomed to fail. Several attempts had been made and they had come to nothing. 'Destiny' he said, 'seems to be fighting on their side. You can never cause dissensions between them or between them and Draupadi ; nor could Drupada be bribed, for he is a man of honour. The wisest plan would be to declare war on them at once, while they are still unprepared, and conquer and kill them all. Let us strike now before the Pandavas have had time to collect troops. Perhaps Drupada will not support them. At any rate conciliation, bribery and plots to murder are no good.' Then Dhritarashtra summoned Vidura, Bhishma and Drona and asked their views. 'This quarrel' Bhishma said, 'between your sons and the sons of Pandu is wrong. I am an old man to whom you are all equally dear. But I must tell you that justice is on their side. This is their kingdom ; and, if you and Duryodhana think that it is yours, far more reason have Yudhishtira and his brothers to consider it theirs. Act justly. The fire at Varanavata has given rise to wicked slander. Do away with this by treating your nephews justly. The Pandavas were unjustly banished and they are being treated unjustly. Give them half the kingdom. Divide the state with them and thus

ensure the peace and the prosperity of the house of Bharata.'

Drona who spoke next agreed with Bhishma. 'Send presents to Drupada and the princes and let your messengers invite the princes to return,' he said, 'Let them be received with honour and affection and let them be installed as rulers of half the kingdom, as Bhishma proposes.' Then last of all Vidura advised justice and generosity. 'Their claim' he said, 'is better than yours or your sons. Disunion and family feuds will only result in ruin for the whole race. The crime of Purochana has cast a stain on you and yours. This is an opportunity to end the slander by proving it to be such. There will be an end to it if you treat our brother's children justly and tenderly. The power of the Kurus will thus increase, for we shall be strengthened by an alliance with Drupada and his kinsmen. Good feeling will exist among us and you will achieve the happiness of the people who rejoice to know that the sons of Pandu still live.'

When all had spoken, Dhritarashtra said to Bhishma and Vidura: 'Your advice is good. It is right that my nephews should share in the kingdom, which is as much theirs as it is mine. Therefore, Vidura, go quickly to Panchala. Give them my affectionate greeting and ask them to come here that we may divide the dominions of the Kurus with them. It is fortunate that the noble sons of Pandu still live and that they have won as their bride the lovely Draupadi. Let all enmity cease. United and at peace the house of Bharata will flourish exceedingly.'

So Vidura, taking many costly presents from the Maharaja, jewels and robes, chariots, horses and elephants, drove quickly to Panchala. There he

The princes return  
to Hastinapura.

was welcomed with respect by Raja Drupada and with affection by the Pandavas and Kunti.

'Maharaja Dhritarashtra, his sons, his ministers and the people,' he said, 'have heard with great pleasure that you all live and have become allied to Drupada's mighty house. He has sent me to bring you his loving greetings and to invite you to return at once to Hastinapura.' Hearing this Yudhishtira, turning towards Drupada, said: 'We are, Raja, more than your guests. You have given us shelter, food and clothes. You have generously supplied all our needs. It is for you then to decide this question. Tell us what we ought to do.' 'I think', Drupada said, 'that you should go to the city.'

So the princes accompanied their uncle back to Hastinapura, and all the way they were received by the people with delight. Hearing that they were coming, the citizens of each town crowded out on the roads to welcome them, strewing flowers in their path and crying, 'Heaven bless the gallant sons of Pandu!' When they drew near to Hastinapura, Dhritarashtra sent all his chiefs and counsellors to meet them that the utmost honour might be shown to them. The city was gay with flags and garlands and the people in thousands ran before their cars cheering them and thanking the gods for their return. When they reached the palace the king received them in *Durbar*. After they had paid their respects to him, to Bhishma and to Drona, Dhritarashtra said: 'I hope that you will forget the past. You are as dear to me as my own sons and it has been a bitter grief to me that there have been jealousy and quarrels between you. The house of Bharata can never flourish unless it is united. I have sent for you, first because I longed to speak once again with you, to hear your voices and to show you

my affection. Next, that I may give you before all here assembled half the kingdom. Go now, when you choose, to Khandavaprastha. There build a city and be rulers of half my dominions.'

After some days Yudhishtira and his brothers, with their mother and many followers, set out for Khandavaprastha. This was a small town in the midst of an uncultivated tract of country. There they built a splendid city which they called Indraprastha (Indra's city) because it was as

The Pandavas go to Khandavaprastha and found a kingdom.

beautiful as the celestial capital. All round it were high stone walls through which noble arched gateways led into the town. Outside the walls were wide and deep moats filled with clear water on which lotuses and lilies grew. In the city were palaces and splendid mansions of white and coloured marble, of pink and grey stone. Upon the walls were turrets for defence and guard houses in which were soldiers protecting the town from attack. But most wonderful of all was the palace of the princes, all of snow white stone with towers and cupolas glittering diamond-bright in the sunshine. Crowds of people were soon attracted to the city. Brahmans, merchants and skilful artisans came in great numbers. In Raja Yudhishtira's service were many clever gardeners who laid out the gardens of the city, musical with the songs of sweet-voiced birds, in which bloomed flowers of scarlet and purple, white, blue, and orange and where grew trees laden with luscious fruits. In these gardens were lakes in which swam swans and ducks and water-fowl of all kinds. On the banks, where stately peacocks strutted, were pleasure houses and pavilions surrounded with cool arcades of tinted stone, their inner rooms adorned with mirrors and jewels and the floors spread with costly carpets.

Never had a fairer capital been built than Indraprastha and there the Pandava princes and their wife Draupadi lived in contentment and prosperity, ruling the people justly and well.

Several years of prosperity passed and the power of the Pandavas increased. One day the sage Narada came to Indraprastha. When he

Yudhishtira resolves to perform the *Rajasuya* sacrifice.

heard that the state prospered, that the people were contented and that the rulers of the earth feared the Pandavas, he said : 'Your father the illustrious Pandu whom I have met in the region of the *Pitris* bade me tell you to perform the sacrifice of *Rajasuya*. "Tell my son," he said, "that my happiness depends upon him. Let him conquer the kingdoms of the earth with the aid of his valiant brothers. Then, if he perform the *Rajasuya*, I shall attain to the mansion of Indra and there pass countless years of joy." Do you, O Raja, now carry out your father's wishes that he may be happy and that your fame may spread far and wide.'

When the *rishi* had gone, the Raja, summoning his brothers and counsellors, told them of the advice of Narada and the message that he had brought from Pandu in the regions of the *Pitris*. They all agreed that he ought to perform the sacrifice. But Yudhishtira, anxious to please his father and eager also to claim the whole earth as his realm, thought long over it. He was not only a dutiful son and an ambitious man ; he was also a just and conscientious ruler. Under him the people prospered. The rains were abundant and the crops were bountiful. Disease, fires, calamities of all kinds were unknown. The taxes were collected peacefully ; the subject kings paid lavish tribute. Crime was stamped out and the people lived



in peace with one another, each pursuing in contentment the trade or profession for which he was fitted. Yudhishtira knew that this sacrifice would be a direct challenge to Duryodhana and other rulers who would become jealous of the pretensions of the Pandavas and their growing power. Therefore he hesitated, even when so advised, to decide to hold the sacrifice. In his doubts he desired the advice of the Gujarat prince Krishna who had befriended his brother Arjuna and who was ever ready to assist the sons of Pandu. Sending messengers to Dwaraka, the capital of the kingdom of the Yadavas where Krishna was, he asked him come to him. Krishna came at once and to him Yudhishtira explained his ambition.

‘I desire to perform the *Rajasuya* sacrifice,’ he said, ‘but you know that the king who does so by the mere act claims to be king of kings, to have power over all other kings and to be feared by all. I am advised to hold it, but I am in doubt whether it is wise and in the best interests of the kingdom.’

‘By your virtues and character you are worthy to perform the sacrifice’, replied Krishna. ‘But first you must prove your title to be emperor of the world, which can only be claimed by him who is the suzerain lord of all kings. To-day the monarch who claims to be lord of all Kshatriya kings is Jarasandha, King of Magadha, Lord of Mathura. He has conquered the land of many kings whom he holds captive in his city. Cisupala, Vakra, the King of the Karushas, Bhagadatta, the Lord of the Yavanas, Paundraka, King of Vanga, Pundra and the Kiratas, Bhishmaka, King of the Bhojas have submitted to him. Many of the defeated sovereigns he has taken as captives to his capital where he keeps them prisoners. If you perform the sacrifice, Jarasandha must challenge you to fight for title of

emperor of the earth. Fight him you must. Therefore my advice is, attack him at once. When you have conquered him and liberated the princes who are now his prisoners, you will be able to perform the sacrifice without any rival.'

But Yudhishtira's heart failed him and he replied : 'Jarasandha has shown his skill and courage on a hundred fields. How shall we overcome a warrior so great as the King of Magadha ?'

Bhima's scorn was roused by his brother's weakness. 'Even those', he said, 'who are weak can reinforce their weakness by trick, by stratagem or by adroitness in warlike tactics. Let us not think that we are sure to be defeated. Let us boldly attack Jarasandha, strong as he is. Perhaps we may kill him and win all his glory.'

'Bhima advises you well, Yudhishtira,' Krishna said. 'You covet the imperial dignity and you deserve it because of your power and might as a king, your justice and humanity as a ruler and your virtue as a man. You must fight for it. Do not fear Jarasandha. A Kshatriya can ask no better fate than to die in battle. Fight Jarasandha, liberate the princes and thus establish for ever your title to be lord of all the Kshatriyas.'

Then at the command of Yudhishtira the armies were prepared, and they marched against the King of Magadha. When the troops reached

Defeat and death of Jarasandha and other victories of the Pandava princes.

the city, Krishna, Bhima and Arjuna, disguising themselves as *Snataka* Brahmins entered the town to take a challenge to Jarasandha, for the city was so strongly fortified that its siege would have taken a long while. When they reached his palace, Jarasandha, who was always respectful to Brahmins, received them at once. He offered them the worship due to Brahmins, but they

would not accept it. Growing suspicious, he enquired what was the cause of their visit. '*Snataka* Brahmans' he said, 'never adorn themselves with garlands and fragrant paste. Who then are you thus decked with flowers and with hands bearing the mark of the bow-string? Why do you refuse to accept my worship?'

'Kshatriyas and also Vaisyas, Raja, can take the vow of *Snataka*', Krishna replied, 'A Kshatriya, taking and keeping this vow, obtains prosperity. We wear garlands of flowers because they are a sign that our plans will succeed, and from an enemy, whose house we have entered by a trick, we cannot accept hospitality or kindness.'

Jarasandha was amazed and asked: 'When have I ever seen you before? How have I injured you? How can I be your foe?'

'Jarasandha, you have conquered many lands and their rulers you hold captive here. But you are not content with your triumphs, for you intend to kill these unfortunate princes as a sacrifice to Rudra. We have come to rescue them and to avenge their defeat by killing you. I am Krishna and this is Bhima and here is Arjuna. Outside your city walls is the army of the great King Yudhishtira. Choose whether you will fight with one of us and so spare your people, or whether you will march out and give battle to the Pandava army.'

'It is true that I hold many princes captive', replied Jarasandha, 'but I have conquered them all in fair fight. Having defeated them, I have a right to sacrifice them if I wish. Either with one of you or with my soldiers against yours I am ready to fight.' Then at the challenge he chose Bhima, for, he said, 'if I am to be conquered, I would wish to be conquered by a great warrior.'

Bhima seized Jarasandha round the waist with a terrible grip. But Jarasandha was a powerful man and he grasped Bhima also with great power. Backwards and forwards they swayed in their struggles. Sometimes Bhima threw Jarasandha; sometimes the latter threw Bhima. Shouting and cursing, they fought like mad elephants till Jarasandha's strength began to fail when Bhima, lifting him up, whirled his body round and then smashed it on the ground. Putting his knee against his backbone, he snapped it like a woodman snaps a faggot. Then, leaving the corpse of the king at the palace gate, they went back to the army. Marching their troops forward, they captured Magadha and liberated the imprisoned kings, who were full of gratitude. 'We lay in misery in the mountain fort of Jarasandha,' they said, 'awaiting the cruel fate he had prepared for us. You have saved us. Tell us what we can do to reward you.'

Krishna said: 'Yudhishtira, the son of Pandu, desires to perform the *Rajasuya* sacrifice. Assist him by acknowledging his overlordship.' They said at once: 'Truly do we recognize him as our overlord.'

Summoning Sahadeva, son of Jarasandha, Krishna, in Yudhishtira's name, gave him his father's kingdom and duly installed him on the throne. Then, laden with booty of all kinds, Krishna and the Pandavas returned to Indraprastha. For days the city was gay with decorations and at night it blazed with lights to celebrate the conquest of the kingdom of Magadha. Thereafter the princes at the head of separate armies marched out to compel the kings to pay tribute. Arjuna conquered the kings of the north; Bhima those of the east; Sahadev the south, and Nakula the west. During this time Yudhishtira was living in great splendour in his capital. From all the conquered

kings the princes took tribute of jewels and robes, swift horses and elephants, pearls and silks and fragrant woods and gold and silver ornaments. So great was the wealth brought by Nakula alone that ten thousand camels could hardly carry it all. Then in triumph the princes returned to Indraprastha where Yudhishtira made preparations for the *Rajasuya* sacrifice.

Great were the rejoicings at Indraprastha, and the king's treasure houses were filled to overflowing with the tributes of the kings. Then

Yudhishtira  
performs the  
*Rajasuya* sacri-  
fice.

Yudhishtira summoned his brothers and his counsellors and said : ' Thanks to Krishna and to you, dear brothers, my power extends over the earth and my palace is filled with vast wealth. Let preparations be made to carry out the sacrifice. Let all those things and materials necessary for the rites be collected. Let food and cattle and other gifts pleasing to the Brahmans be collected.' Then the king appointed the sacrificial priests and those who were to chant the Vedic hymns and he named the *adhyaryu*, the *hotris* and the *hotragas*. The large sacrificial ground was laid out and enclosed, and thereon were built temples and shrines and all the buildings needed for the ceremony. Then the king commanded them to send messengers to all the princes and rulers and to the Brahmans, to the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas and all respectable Sudras bidding them come to the city. Nakula went to Hastinapura to invite Dhritarashtra, Bhishma, Drona, Vidura and his cousins to witness the sacrifice. With Brahmans walking before them the elders of the Kuru race, Bhishma, Vidura, Kripa and Dhritarashtra arrived at Indraprastha. Hundreds of Kshatriyas came from different lands, bringing with them many costly offerings. Duryodhana headed a

procession of his brothers and among the royal guests were Suvala, Sakuni, King of Gandhara and Karna, and Salya, Drona and his son Aswatthaman, Yajnasena with his sons and the great charioteer king Bhagadatta of Pragjyotisha, Vasudeva, King of the Paundryas, and the Kings of Vanga and Kalinga, the Dravidas and Singhalas and the King of Kasmira, King Kuntibhoja and King Gauravahana and Cisupala, Rama, Aniruddha, Kanaka and many score more of princes. For all these monarchs were built splendid mansions surrounded by shady gardens, and the floors of these palaces were spread with costly carpets and the walls studded with jewels.

Having welcomed his guests, Yudhishtira assigned to each of his relatives a duty at the sacrifice. Dussasana superintended the work of the cooks. Aswatthaman's duty was to attend on the Brahmans. Sanjaya had to carry the messages and presents of Yudhishtira to the royal guests. Bhishma and Drona supervised all the arrangements of the sacrifice. Kripa was made guardian of the jewels and gold to be distributed to the Brahmans. Vidura was appointed to act as treasurer of the royal household; while Duryodhana received the tributes offered by the vassal kings and chiefs. Very splendid was the scene in the sacrificial enclosure surrounded with the dazzling white marble pavilions of the guests and flashing on all sides with the glittering mail of the Pandava troops. In the blaze of sunlight flags and flowers, wreaths and garlands made such a mass of rainbow-hued colours that the place of sacrifice seemed like a lovely garden shut in by glistening white walls or like a tank covered with scarlet, purple and white lotuses and lilies enclosed in banks of snow-white marble. Surrounded by the sacrificial priests Yudhishtira entered the



sacred place and began the *Rajasuya* sacrifice with six fires and lavish gifts to Brahmans. Into the fires ghee was poured and the *Ida* and *Homa* performed. Day after day the stately ceremonies proceeded till on the last Yudhishtira was sprinkled with the sacred water in the presence of the great *rishis* headed by Narada. No Sudra or anyone without vows was allowed to approach the place of sacrifice. Then, when the sacrifice was complete, Bhishma, addressing Yudhishtira, said : ' O Bharata, let *arghyas* be offered to the guests each in his order of precedence. The teacher, the sacrificial priest, the kinsman, the *snataka*, the friend and the king, these are the six to whom the *arghya* should be offered. Now let *arghyas* be brought for each, and give it first to him who is the greatest of the guests.'

' Whom then ', asked Yudhishtira, ' do you, grand-sire, name as greatest ? '

Bhishma replied : ' Surely is Krishna the first of all. As the sun is brightest of all the heavenly bodies, so is Krishna a sun among all present by reason of his energy, strength and courage. Glorious is this place of sacrifice made by his presence.'

Then in obedience to the command of the father of the Kuru race, Sahadev presented the first *arghya* to Krishna.

Then up sprang Cisupala, Raja of Chedi, and angrily protested. ' Who is this son of the Vrishni race,' he asked, ' that he should receive worship as if he were a king when he sits among all these great rulers ? You son of Pandu, it is evident that you do not know what is right and proper at such a great ceremony as this and Bhishma has broken the rules of morality by

The Rajas, thinking themselves insulted, threaten to leave the place of sacrifice.

giving you such advice. Krishna is not the oldest here, nor can you regard him as your teacher when Drona and Kripa, tutors of the Bharata princes, are present. Krishna is not sacrificial priest, preceptor or king. You have honoured him thus from selfish motives and because he extends his protection to you and yours, because he has increased, and you think that he will increase still more, your power. If, Yudhishtira, all the time you intended thus to honour Krishna, why did you invite these kings and princes? Did you invite them in order to insult them? We have not come here to pay tribute to you and offer you presents from fear or from any desire of gain or because we have been flattered and coaxed into coming. We have come out of friendship to do you honour when you assume the imperial dignity, and you insult us. And you, Krishna, why have you accepted this honour to which you have no claim? You have eagerly taken the *arghya* as a dog greedily eats the ghee he has stolen. Shame on you whom the son of Pandu thus mocks before us all, offering royal honours to one who is not royal.'

Shouts of approval from many greeted this angry speech. Cisupala rose from his seat and followed by some of the royal guests prepared to leave the enclosure. But in courteous tones Yudhishtira protested. 'Why do you thus upbraid me and insult Bhishma? See how many of my guests older than you approve of the honour paid to Krishna.'

'He who does not approve of honour shown to Krishna,' Bhishma said, 'is a fool, for Krishna was first born on earth when the world was young and is the eldest of mankind. Who among these monarchs has not been conquered by the might of this son of the Satwata race? Krishna deserves not only our

worship but that of the three worlds. I am an old man. From many in the past have I heard of the acts performed by Krishna since his birth. We have not worshipped him from selfish motives in the hope that he will help us, but because he is first of men in bravery, glory and power. As the *agnihotra* is the first of Vedic sacrifices, as the *gayatri* is the first of prayers, as the ocean is greater than the rivers, as the sun is the brightest of all luminaries, as Meru is the highest of mountains, as Garuda is greatest of birds, so is Krishna the greatest of all on earth.'

Sahadev angrily challenged those gathering round Cisupala. 'If any of you are displeased because Krishna is honoured, let him fight with me that I may put my foot on his head. All those who have sense will approve the worship of Krishna who is teacher, father, *guru* all in one.'

Enraged at Sahadev's words, Cisupala, turning to the Rajas, asked: 'Will you bear the insult offered to us? Let us fight the Pandavas, even if they have all the Vrishnis to help them.' Then, leaving their seats, many of the kings and princes with angry faces collected around Cisupala and consulted what was to be done. 'We cannot sit on and give our approval to the sacrifice', and murmurs of rage were heard and swords were drawn.

Seeing the kings collect together and hearing the threats of Cisupala, Yudhishtira was alarmed and asked Bhishma what was to be done. 'The ceremony', he said, 'will end in disaster: misfortune and disgrace will fall on me and the kingdom, if the sacrifice cannot be completed.'

'Have no fear,' replied the aged Kuru, speaking loud enough for Cisupala to hear. 'Your sacrifice

will be happily performed. Cisupala and these foolish men seek their own destruction in thus provoking Krishna. For the moment he spares them; but, once he is roused, he will kill them as a lion kills dogs. They are made thus to defy him. You did right to honour before every one him who is the creator and destroyer of all mankind.'

'Miserable dotard', shouted back Cisupala, 'do you think to frighten me and these monarchs by your lying words? Blind to the truth yourself, you wish the Pandavas blindly to follow you. What do we care for all the boasted deeds of your hero Krishna? You are old and foolish and the Pandavas are fools to follow your advice.'

At these insulting words Bhima sprang angrily from his seat. Grinding his teeth, his eyes flashing with rage, he was striding towards Cisupala when Bhishma caught him by the arm and persuaded him to be quiet. Seeing this, Cisupala, drunk with pride in his strength, called out mockingly: 'Leave go of him, Bhishma. Let him fight me. I will destroy him as fire destroys an insect.'

Furious at this new insult, Bhima struggled to free himself from the old man's kindly grasp, but Bhishma pacified him. 'Do not be angry at this madman's ravings', he said. 'His fate is about to be fulfilled. He is doomed to die. Who else but a madman would dare to abuse me so? Krishna will destroy him soon.'

But Cisupala was deaf to all warnings. 'I care for no Krishnas,' he cried wildly. 'Why, Bhishma, do you praise him and not these brave kings whom Yudhishtira has insulted? Miserable old man, as the bhulinga bird, picking morsels of meat from between the teeth of the lion, lives only as long as the king of beasts pleases, so you and your kinsmen live only at

the pleasure of these chiefs.' 'It may be true', retorted Bhishma, 'that I live by permission of these kings; but I tell you, Cisupala, that I do not care a jot for them or their favour.'

When they heard his contemptuous words, the princes cried out: 'Are we to stand such insults? Old as he is, let us kill the wretch.'

'Kill me or not, as you please', cried the old man, 'it is idle to wrangle thus. Mere words are useless. I tell you I despise you all. We have worshipped Krishna and we have done right to do so. Now let any madman among you challenge Krishna armed with the discus and mace.'

'Be it so!' shouted Cisupala. 'Let us have done with words. Krishna, hero of the Pandavas, fight me. I will kill you and all the Pandavas who have honoured you deserving no honour.'

Thus addressed, Krishna rose quietly and in a calm voice said: 'This man in his life has committed many cruel and unjust deeds. I have borne his insults patiently, in the hope that he might at the last be restored to reason and make amends. It is undesirable that this auspicious ceremony, which should be celebrated with friendliness and in rejoicing, should be marred by bloodshed. But Cisupala has gone too far.' Then, as Cisupala, drawing his sword, turned towards him, Krishna aimed his shining discus at him. Like a flash of lightning the burnished steel flew across the arena. It struck Cisupala beneath the left ear severing his head from his body. For a minute there was an awe-struck silence among the onlookers. Then from most of them arose a shout of approval as attendants hurried to take away the corpse of the dead Raja. But those who had murmured against Yudhishtira and Bhima sat in sullen silence, looking at the calm

face of Krishna who stood like an avenging god by Bhishma's side.

The ceremonies of the sacrifice had to be interrupted for some days, while the funeral rites of Cisupala were performed. Thereafter his son was installed as Raja of the Chedis ; and, after the sacrificial ground had been consecrated afresh, for it had been polluted by the spilling of blood, the

Vyasa foretells  
the great war :  
Yudhishtira's  
despair.

stately ritual was continued. Amid the blessings of the Brahmins and the congratulations of his brother sovereigns Yudhishtira completed his sacrifice. Then the Rajas bade him farewell and each was escorted with honour by one of his brothers to the limits of the kingdom. Last of all went Krishna. Chief of the *rishis*, Vyasa, as he departed blessing Yudhishtira, bade him use his power wisely in this position of imperial dignity to which he had attained. Bowing before him and touching his feet, Yudhishtira said : ' The illustrious sage Narada declared that omens threatened my house in connection with the *Rajasuya* sacrifice. I pray you to tell me, is all well now ? Have those ill omens come to naught by the death of Cisupala ? '

' Calamity will threaten the house of Bharata,' replied Vyasa, ' for thirteen years. When that period has passed, you, O king, will be the cause of the destruction of all the Kshatriyas because of the wickedness of Duryodhana. They will all be destroyed by Bhima and Arjuna. Do not be sad. This is your predestined fate. No man can be stronger than his destiny. What is to happen shall come about through no sin of yours.'

With these words he departed. But Yudhishtira, perplexed and frightened, sat for hours thinking of the



awful words of the *rishi*. 'Who indeed', he said to himself, 'can be stronger than his fate? But must I sit idle waiting for the day of destruction to come?' He summoned his brothers and told them what Vyasa had said: 'In thirteen years a great war will break out. In it all the Kshatriyas of the earth will die. I shall be its cause and you, Bhima and Arjuna, will be the instruments of destruction. O my brothers, if I and I alone am to cause this terrible slaughter, would it not be better for me to die first? What purpose is served by my living if I am to cause such universal destruction?'

His brothers comforted him. 'Do not fret so. It is right that you should reign and do your duty as king. That which is to be will be, whatever we mortals do.'

'If', replied Yudhishthira, 'I must live, I vow here that I will speak no harsh words, that I will seek quarrel with no one. If I live so, how can there arise any disagreement to cause war? Thus will I try to defeat my awful fate.'

During his stay in Indraprastha for the sacrifice Duryodhana had been astonished at the wealth of his cousins. In Hastinapura there was no palace as splendid as theirs. It was filled also with many quaint and novel designs cunningly devised by the architects. One day, as Duryodhana wandered through a gallery, he came to a floor of glass so cleverly laid and with such perfect imitations of floating lotus flowers and leaves carved in it that it looked just like water. Duryodhana raised his garments that they might not be wetted. Soon afterwards he came to a real tank so clear and level with the marble floor that he believed it to be as solid as the

Duryodhana's  
growing jealousy of  
the Pandavas.

crystal one and stepping forward fell headlong into the water. The accident was witnessed by Bhima and some servants who laughed at him. Duryodhana was naturally angry and humiliated. Later on again he mistook a glass floor for real water and raised his clothes. On another day, seeing a door of crystal which he believed to be open, he hit his head against it and hurt himself. Later on, thinking that another door was closed which was really open, he went to open it and fell through it. Yet again, seeing a door which he believed closed, though it was really open, he walked away. Duryodhana was very angry at these accidents, for his cousins laughed much at him and teased him because he had not a palace as wonderful as theirs.

As he left Indraprastha Duryodhana's thoughts were very bitter. He had seen how prosperous were the men whom he feared and his heart was filled with hatred and jealousy. On the journey homeward he could think of nothing else but the wonderful palace and the wealth of Yudhishtira. He was so silent and sad that his uncle Sakuni asked him what was the matter.

'I am sad because of the prosperity of the Pandavas,' he replied. 'How vast is now their wealth and how unlimited is their power! My cousin has assumed the imperial dignity, and all the kings of the earth do him honour and pay him tribute. What happiness can there be for me when I see those whom I hate so happy? A fever of jealousy burns me up as the sun in summer dries a shallow tank. I cannot bear it. I shall take poison or drown myself. How am I to live contentedly when my enemies prosper so? How hard I have tried to be rid of them, yet all my plans have failed. Can you wonder that I despair? Destiny is

stronger than man. Though they once wandered as beggars in the forests, the sons of Pandu have now been restored to power, such power as I can never hope to win. I have seen their wealth and have been laughed at by them and even by their servants. To me life has now become unbearable.'

'It is foolish of you to be jealous of the sons of Pandu' said Sakuni. 'Their present prosperity is their lot in life and it is idle to fight against destiny. All your plots against them failed because it was so fated. Despite your efforts they escaped from the house of lac and from the forests. They won as wife Draupadi

and by their marriage with her gained the powerful alliance of Drupada and his kinsmen. Now, having obtained half their ancestral kingdom, they have grown strong and rich. What is the use of feeble repining and jealousy? You also have allies. Why do you not make war and become also a great conqueror? It is true that you cannot conquer the Pandavas; but even then there is no reason for despair. I know a way in which you can conquer even them, can get all their wealth.'

'Tell me quickly' said Duryodhana eagerly.

'Listen,' replied Sakuni. 'Yudhishtira is very fond of gambling. If asked to play, he will not refuse. But, though he likes play, he is not skilful. Now I am. There is no trick and device in throwing the dice at which I am not adept. There is no one my equal in play. Persuade your father to invite him to a gambling match, and I will win for you his kingdom and all his possessions.'

At these cunning words the heart of Duryodhana was filled with joy.

Soon after they had all returned to Hastinapura, Sakuni found an opportunity to tell the king how unhappy Duryodhana was. 'Your son, Maharaja, is like a dead man. He smiles no more, he eats little; he is growing thin and weak. Send for him and ask the reason for this illness.'

So Dhritarashtra summoned his son and said: 'I hear that you are sad and ill. What ails you? Is not all my wealth yours? Is there any joy in life that is not provided for you in my palace? Are not all those around you, relatives and servants, anxious to please you? What is there that you want and cannot have?'

'My life' replied Duryodhana, 'has become a misery to me because of my jealousy of Yudhishtira. What man worthy of the name can live happily if his foe prospers? Yudhishtira is our foe, and his power and wealth are a danger to us. Now that I have seen how rich he is, I am tormented by jealousy and fear that make me ill and unable to enjoy life. It is true that in this palace all that money can buy is mine. But what is the good of all this? While Yudhishtira prospers, I can have no peace of mind.'

He paused for a moment and then spoke again. 'Father, the wealth of my cousin is extraordinary. He supports thousands of Brahmans, feeding them daily with rich fare served on silver and gold plates. The tribute brought for the sacrifice was immense, jewels and gold, skins, embroidered cloths and fine blankets, thousands of horses, elephants and camels. Never was so much tribute offered to any prince before. From the ocean water had been brought in jars of gold. All day the blowing of conches proclaimed that another ten thousand Brahmans had been fed. Such wealth and power as Yudhishtira enjoys is more than I can bear.'

Sakuni, who had been standing all this time by the Maharaja's side, said : ' Duryodhana, it is natural that the sight of Yudhishtira's power should make you sad. But do not lament ; I can end your troubles. I am a clever gambler. No one knows better than I do how to throw dice so as to be sure to win each time. Yudhishtira is devoted to gambling, but he has little skill. If he is challenged to play, as a Kshatriya he will be too proud to refuse. Let me play with him, and I undertake to win all his wealth for you.'

Duryodhana turned at once to his father. ' Sakuni, as he says, is a skilful gambler. Father, give him permission to challenge Yudhishtira to a game at dice.'

Dhritarashtra had shown signs of impatience as he listened to the petulant complaints of his son. Now he shook his head disapprovingly at the suggestion of Sakuni. Yet he did not refuse. ' Let me first consult Vidura. I have no wiser counsellor or one more versed in morality. He shall say what is to be done.'

But Duryodhana saw that he had only to make a fuss and he would get his own way, so he said in a sad voice. ' If you ask my uncle, he will advise you not to give Sakuni permission. Then I shall certainly kill myself. When I am dead, I shall be no further trouble to you.'

Dhritarashtra loved his wicked son dearly and when he heard him threaten to kill himself, he yielded at once ' Do not fret, my son, it shall be as you wish.' Summoning his servants, he ordered them to call carpenters and joiners and set them to build a pavilion of great size and splendour supported by a thousand columns of carved wood in which the game of dice could take place. Then sending for Vidura, he told him what he had decided. When his brother heard of the proposed match, his heart was sad, for he knew that

doom was overtaking the house of Bharata. He tried to stop the impending misfortune. 'Brother,' he said, 'you do wrong to give your sons and nephews this chance of a quarrel. Gambling always leads to disputes. Forbid this match.'

But Dhritarashtra would not listen. 'No, no, my brother,' he replied, 'with the blessing of heaven there will be no dispute. But even if there must be a quarrel we must accept our fate whatever it is. We elders will witness the match and keep the peace. I cannot bear to know of Duryodhana's sadness and not remove its cause, if I can. Go to Indraprastha and greet Yudhishtira affectionately, bidding him come at once to a gambling match.'

In despair Vidura went to Bhishma to ask him to interfere, for he knew that if the game took place his race

was doomed. Left alone, Dhritarashtra thought long of his brother's warning. He knew that he was right, that nothing but harm could come

from encouraging rivalry between his sons and their cousins. Yet he loved Duryodhana so much that he found it hard to refuse him anything. Still he called him again and, embracing him, said: 'Dear son, to please you I have ordered that Yudhishtira shall be invited. But think again. Your uncle is right: gambling is an evil pastime leading only to unhappiness and quarrels. Give up this idea of your uncle Sakuni. Here you live like a king. You are my heir. My wealth is yours. When you are so prosperous and possessed of everything for which men care, why should you allow a foolish jealousy of another who is rich to rob you of your peace of mind. Conquer your jealousy and do not envy Yudhishtira. I beg you to think again of all the dangers with which Sakuni's scheme threatens our family.'



‘ Father, I must despise myself and hate my life as long as I am content to eat and drink while Yudhishtira prospers so much. This palace and all the luxury of my life is nothing to me while he is great : I hate him so. Think of it ! The wretch has assumed imperial dignity : all the kings of the earth acknowledge his greatness. His wealth is immense. No one ever saw jewels more wonderful than those which were brought to him as tribute. As the eldest he assigned to me the task of receiving the gems. Hour after hour I handled precious stones the glories of which I have never seen equalled. The palace itself is cunningly and exquisitely wrought. In it there are tanks made of crystal that looks like real water with lotuses carved so as to seem to float on the surface. Thinking one of these was water, I raised my clothes to cross it. Bhima saw me and laughed mockingly at me, as if in ridicule that we had no such wonders in our palace here. If I could, father, I would kill him to-day for that insult. In another part of the palace I fell into a pool of water, because, remembering the first, I thought that it was crystal also. They all laughed at me and Yudhishtira sent servants to bring dry clothes for me. Then there were doors of crystal so made that it was impossible to know whether they were open or shut. Against one of these I struck my head a severe blow in trying to walk through the glass. The twins were near and laughed at my misfortune. Then, in derision, they went ahead of me, saying, “ Here is the door. Come this way.” Afterwards that wretch Bhima mocked me, saying continually : ‘ Son of Dhritarashtra, this is the door.’ ”

Duryodhana describes the wealth of the Pandavas

‘ Dear son, your cousins were rude to mock you, but why do you allow such accidents that might happen to any one to make you unhappy ? ’

‘Those accidents, father, only made me hate my cousins more bitterly. But it is their wealth which maddens me so. For hours I could describe to you what I saw, piles of skins and cloths woven of the softest wools mixed with threads of gold, flocks of camels and she-asses fattened with olives and pilusha, hundreds of thousands of serving maids of rare beauty with long hair and covered with golden ornaments. There were tributes of horses of fine breed with the speed of the wind, of swords with handles of purest ivory set with diamonds. There were wagon-loads of gold and silver, many vehicles, beds and all kinds of furniture. There were suits of armour set with jewels, and there were weapons in great quantity arrows, bows, battle-axes and scimitars. One Raja offered a thousand elephants with tusks like the shafts of ploughs saddled with golden girdles and with jewelled howdahs. One king gave a hundred horses of the colour of the mango leaf decked in gold and two thousand elephants caparisoned with gold. Another Raja gave fourteen thousand serving girls and ten thousand serving-men with their wives and six and twenty cars drawn by splendid elephants. The Rajas of Chola and Pandya brought hundreds of jars of gold and many loads of fragrant sandal and aloe wood and gems of brilliancy and cloth of gold and robes beautifully dyed, yet they were not allowed to enter the place of sacrifice because they were of low-caste. The king of the Singhalas brought golden dishes filled with lapis lazuli and heaps of pearls and hundreds of jewel-embroidered elephant cloths. Such wealth no one ever saw before. In the palace thousands of attendants waited on the kings and Brahmans. Elephants of war and countless soldiers were housed in splendid stables and barracks. At the ceremony kings waited on Yudhishtira as if they were

his servants. The Raja of the south country stood holding his coat of mail. The Raja of Magadha held the garlands and the headgear. Raja Ekalavya brought the ceremonial shoes; the Raja of Avanti poured the water for the final bath; while Raja Chekitana held the quiver, the Raja of Kasi the bow and Salya the gold-hilted sword. Over his head the sacred water was poured by the *rishis* who approached the Raja as if he were Indra himself. Such glory as Yudhishtira has achieved makes me sick with envy. Having completed the *Rajasuya* sacrifice, he has attained such greatness as was never gained by the exalted Harischandra, by Rantideva, by Manu, by King Prithu, or even by Nahusha. What use is it for me to go on living? A yoke tied to the bullock's shoulders by a blind man becomes loose; even so is it with us. The younger branch of the family is becoming more powerful, while we the senior sons are getting weaker and being humiliated. It is useless to talk to me. Seeing this wealth, my joy in life has gone for ever.'

'Dear son' replied Dhritarashtra sadly, 'you are my eldest son and you are very dear to me. All my wealth and my kingdom itself are yours. Why then do you cherish this foolish jealousy? The pangs of envy are bitter. Why cannot you be as Yudhishtira is? You have half the kingdom over the whole of which his father ruled; you have friends and vast wealth. Yet he does not envy you. Why then should you be jealous of him? If you wish for the glories of a sacrifice, I will instantly give orders and the priests will arrange for you the *saptatantu* sacrifice. Then the kings of the earth will come willingly to do you honour and to give you gifts and tribute.

Duryodhana insists that the Pandavas must be regarded as foes.

To covet goods of others is the sign of a mean mind. He who is satisfied with his lot in life and does his duty is the happy man. He envies no one; he minds his own business, and he desires only what is rightfully his. He who is calm and self-controlled in good or evil fortune, who attends to his work and makes himself skilful in it and who wishes well to his neighbours, he is the man who is contented and happy. The sons of Pandu are as your arms. Do not cut off your own limbs! It will be an evil day for us all if you cause family quarrels simply because you are jealous of your cousins. They are your flesh and blood: you have the same grandparents. Do not nurse this foolish jealousy of yours. Think no more of it, but enjoy your life and all the pleasures that my wealth assures you.'

'Father, you speak of my hatred of Yudhishtira as if it were no concern of yours that he is rich. You give me moral instruction as if you were a book, not a man, as the spoon brings the soup to the lips without any knowledge of the taste. You and I are one. My dangers are as much your dangers: my interests are yours. If I accept your advice and am content to sit quiet, enjoying life while the sons of Pandu grow stronger and stronger, we are all doomed to ruin. Because you are old and cautious and anxious for peace, you must not force your sons to pursue a weak and cowardly policy. Kings are governed by rules of right and wrong different from those observed by ordinary men. A king must always be jealous of superior power, and he must never rest till he has subdued the king whose strength threatens him. What does it matter if he be kinsman or not? It is not in that way that one can know friend from foe. A king must always be jealous of him who is greater

than he is. No one can win power and prosperity if he is contented with his lot. For a peaceful king there is no future. It is natural that a king should regard all other kings as his enemies. If a foe threatens him, and he does nothing to destroy him, he is like one who, being ill, applies no treatment to his disease. A foe, if neglected, grows large enough at last to swallow you just as the tiny white ants at last destroy the mighty forest tree. Do not advise me to abandon my jealousy of Yudhishtira. He is your enemy as much as mine. We shall be worse than foolish to watch him grow richer and make no effort against him. I envy his power and I desire to rob him of it. I am not strong enough to do so in the battle-field. I know it. But rather than idly watch him prosper more and more, I will lead an army against him and either conquer or die where I fight. Feeling thus, can you think that I can cure myself of my jealousy which I believe is both natural and wise? Either the sons of Pandu or you and your sons are doomed to ruin. Old as you are, it is right that you should guard our future.'

Sakuni, who had heard Duryodhana's argument with his father, now said: 'I can win for you all the

Dhritarashtra  
weakly yields to  
his wicked son.

wealth of Yudhishtira. Maharaja, send for Yudhishtira. By gambling we shall conquer him, for no one has my skill. Betting is my bow, the dice are my arrows, the marks on them my bow-string and the dice-board my car.' Again Duryodhana begged his father, 'Let him challenge Yudhishtira. In this way we may overcome him.' Dhritarashtra still urged that the advice of Vidura should be taken, but Duryodhana replied that Vidura favoured the Pandavas, that he was old and without courage. 'He who lives carefully avoiding all risks and all dangers

comes to no good, living uselessly like an insect in the rains,' he said. 'Only those who act quickly and boldly deserve success.'

Dhritarashtra replied: 'It is all very well to talk so, but you are beginning what may lead to terrible war. It is never well to make enemies of the strong.'

'But what harm can there be in a game of dice?' asked Duryodhana. 'From ancient days men have played and no one has died through it. Gambling may rid us peaceably of deadly foes. If we boldly stake our fortunes, we deserve to win. Then the Pandavas will no more be our superiors. Equal in power we can then live in peace.'

'You do wrong to urge me so,' said the king. 'Certain I am that you will repent of your act, that ruin and death will befall us as a result of this game. Vidura is right. Such family quarrels are fatal. But have your way. Be it so. The black clouds of fate are gathering round our house. What is to be must be. Mortals cannot fight with destiny.'

Summoning Vidura, he told him that he had once more discussed the matter with Duryodhana and that he had decided to let him have his way. Vidura again tried to dissuade him. 'Brother, this order of yours must be obeyed, but think well. It is not good that this game should take place. It will lead to disunion and then to fighting among our children.'

'Vidura, I know that you are wise and that you have the good of our house at heart. We mortals are not free. Man proposes and God disposes. If fate is not hostile, the game at dice can lead to no harm. If we are destined to ruin, it will come whatever we do or do not do. Go then quickly to Indraprastha and bring Yudhishtira here.'



Unwillingly and sadly Vidura started out for Indraprastha in a car drawn by swift horses. Arrived

Yudhishtira  
accepts the chal-  
lenge to a match at  
dice.

at the palace, he was welcomed with respect by the Pandavas who noticed how sad he looked. 'What brings you, uncle, and why is your face so sorrowful? Is all well? Do the

Maharaja and his sons prosper?' asked Yudhishtira.

'The Maharaja and his sons are well and the kingdom is at peace. Dhritarashtra has sent me to invite you to come to Hastinapura to engage in a game of dice. Skilled gamblers are being invited and the stakes will be high.'

'Gambling', replied Yudhishtira, 'leads to quarrelling. The wise man avoids causes of quarrel. Still I will be advised by you. What shall we do?'

'You speak truly', replied Vidura. 'Gambling is the cause of much trouble and dissension. I did my best to persuade Dhritarashtra not to invite you, but he would not listen to me.'

'Besides our cousins who else will play?'

'Many are coming' said Vidura. 'Greatest of all players and most skilful is Sakuni, Raja of Gandhara. Among the others will be Livingati, Raja Chitrasena, Satyavrata, Purumitra and Jaya.'

'These men are all known as reckless gamblers full of deceit and tricks. I am not willing to come to gamble,' said Yudhishtira. 'I will go with you since the Maharaja invites me, but I shall not play unless Sakuni challenges me publicly. Then I must play, for a Kshatriya can never refuse a public challenge.'

Having said this, Yudhishtira gave orders for his chariots to be got ready and the next day with Vidura, his brothers and Draupadi he started for the capital

of the Kurus. On reaching Hastinapura, he was greeted with affection by Bhishma, Drona and he embraced them all. Even Duryodhana pretended to be glad to see his cousins who were received by the Maharaja and Queen Gandhari. A sumptuous feast was given in their honour and they passed the night in splendid rooms furnished with jewelled beds. When morning came, they were invited to come to the pavilion that had been specially built for the games at dice. Very wonderful was this chamber of crystal and stone, its roof supported by hundreds of golden pillars inlaid with *lapis lazuli*. The arrival of the Pandavas created a stir and all the gamblers rose to greet them.

No sooner was Yudhishtira seated than Sakuni called out : ' Great king, we have eagerly awaited you. Compared with you most of us are poor men. It is fitting that you should be master of our sport. We await your orders. Give us rules for our play and order the dice to be cast.'

But Yudhishtira did not wish to play at all and he replied : ' Sakuni, deceit in gambling is an evil of which no Kshatriya can approve. Why then are you so eager to gamble ? If you play, be sure, Sakuni, that you win by fair means only.'

' It is a question of skill that makes the winner at dice. There is no question of cheating or deceit. Let us then begin to play. You need fear no tricks. Fix the stakes and lay down the rules for our contest.'

' A victory honestly won is one thing but gambling is another. Deceit easily enters into gambling. For my part I do not wish to win any one's wealth by cunning or trick. Therefore I do not care to play at dice where tricks are possible.'

To this Sakuni retorted angrily : ' What is this talk of cheating ? Whatever the contest, whether it be an

argument among the learned, or a struggle between armed men or a game at dice, there is the desire to win which is not a very worthy one perhaps, but it is at least natural. If you believe that I am going to cheat you, if you fear that, do not play.'

'I do not refuse any man's challenge' replied Yudhishtira proudly. 'That is my rule in life. In gambling as in all else our fortunes are in the keeping of our destiny. With whom shall I play? Who can stake as high as I can?'

Duryodhana said: 'None of us may be as rich you, but we have wealth. I will supply the stakes. Sakuni here will play for me.'

'That seems to me,' said his cousin, 'a strange arrangement. But if you wish it so, let us begin.'

In the pavilion a crowd of spectators had gathered to witness the gambling. Royal gamesters had arrived in great numbers. Tables had been set at intervals all over the floor for players. Around the four walls stages with seats had been erected. In the centre of the hall was the royal enclosure where sat Maharaja Dhritarashtra and the members of the royal family.

Dhritarashtra had at first regretted that he had sent Vidura to Indraprastha. When he was alone and thinking quietly in his blindness, he knew that he had done wrong in yielding to his son's unnatural hatred of his cousins. But when his children were with him he had no conscience left: all he desired was to make Duryodhana happy and to secure more power and wealth for his sons. Blind though he was, he had been led into the hall and, seated on the gold throne, he listened eagerly to the talk around him, constantly asking questions as to the exact positions of the players, how they looked and what they were saying.

His heart was hardened now against his powerful nephews, and his old face betrayed an excitement and greed that seemed out of keeping with his age and rank. Behind the Maharaja were the elders of the Kuru race, Bhishma and Vidura, with Kripa and Drona. All four looked sad, their mournful faces contrasting with the general air of festivity and interest around them. All of them knew that this was to be an evil meeting for the house of Bharata. Ranged around them, right and left of the Maharaja, sat the royal guests, kings and princes in cloth of gold and jewels, lords of the earth who had come at the bidding of Dhritarashtra to witness or to take part in the games of dice.

When the blare of the heralds' trumpets announced the Maharaja's command that play should begin, one or two pairs of princely gamblers took their seats at the tables. But the interest of most of the guests and of the vast crowds of spectators who filled the three sides of the pavilion was fixed on the group in the centre of which was the tall heroic figure of Yudhishtira. When he said: 'Let us begin', he took his place at the table and motioned Sakuni to take the place facing him. Behind Sakuni stood Duryodhana with Karna, Dussasana and his brothers. Taking from his neck a rope of pearls each set in gold and threaded on a gold chain Yudhishtira said proudly: 'You, Sakuni, have challenged me to play. Here is my stake. What have you to match these perfect gems from the southern ocean?' His tone was contemptuous and Duryodhana's face darkened with angry blood. Sakuni alone showed no emotion but sat holding the dice box. 'You need not boast, my cousin, of your jewels', said Duryodhana. 'We also have gems of great value. Here is my stake'; and he

threw on the table a jewelled girdle of rare beauty. Yudhishtira cast first, gaining a five and a four. Then Sakuni threw getting a four and a six. 'The necklace is yours', said Yudhishtira angrily; 'but I can beggar you before you can beggar me. In my treasury I have a thousand jars of gold. These I bet against their weight in gold.' Once more the dice rattled in the box, as Sakuni threw first. He gained a three and a two. Yudhishtira, his face flushing with triumph, exclaimed: 'Surely I shall beat that.' Quickly he seized the box and shaking it vigorously, threw. But the dice were loaded and they fell as three and one.

'Sakuni, you cheat me. Of that I am certain', said Yudhishtira, picking up and examining the dice. But they were so cunningly contrived that they seemed just ordinary carefully carved squares of polished ivory. By this time the excitement among the spectators had become great. Attention was fixed on the table at which Yudhishtira sat. Even blind Dhritarashtra leaned forward staring with sightless eyes in the direction, eager to hear each word of the players.

Yudhishtira  
gambles away his  
jewels, his servants,  
his cars, elephants  
and horses.

'If you think,' retorted Sakuni, 'that we cheat, bring other dice. But I warn you that, whatever ivory-ries you get, I will beat you.' 'Dare you say that, knave? We will see.

Play on. Redouble your stakes, for you set yourself a hard task when you seek to ruin me,' exclaimed Yudhishtira.

He spoke angrily, his face flushing and his hands trembling with rage. On Duryodhana's cruel lips there was a smile of triumph. It was for this that he and Sakuni had planned and hoped. They knew that, once Yudhishtira got angry, he would become reck-

less and no one, not his brothers or even his wife, would be able to stop him from squandering his whole possessions in an effort to defeat his calm cunning opponent. Sakuni did not smile, nor did a muscle of his face move. With his magic dice he knew that Yudhishtira was doomed and he could afford to bear the insults of the furious prince.

'Knaves am I?' he said. 'You may be a great king, but it is the sign of a small and mean nature to lose your temper because you are beaten. Truly such conduct is unworthy of you, great son of Pandu.' He spoke in cold measured tones with no trace of excitement in his voice but in a jeering tone which maddened Yudhishtira.

'Be silent, cheating rogue. At the proper time I will teach you manners. To the play. I stake my splendid car of gold drawn by eight horses white as the moon's light, swift as the wind.'

Once more the dice rattled and again Sakuni won.

'No matter!' exclaimed Yudhishtira. 'I stake you now the singing girls of my palace, a hundred thousand maidens of rare beauty in rich robes and garlands, their shapely arms and ankles adorned with bangles of pure gold. They are damsels worthy to dance and sing to the gods themselves. These slaves I stake you.'

Sakuni won again, and in quiet even voice said: 'King, I win again. What else have you with which to coax fortune back?'

Next Yudhishtira wagered his men-servants, thousands of trained attendants dressed in silk and wearing earrings. He lost these. Then he offered a thousand elephants with cloth of gold saddle cloths, tusks as long as plough-shafts, mighty animals trained to battle, each with eight females. These Sakuni also won.



Next he squandered his battle cars in his effort to save himself from Sakuni's roguery, a thousand cars with gilded poles and flag staffs, each with its team of horses and charioteers. In his stables he had many horses of rare breeds that he had won from kings whom he had conquered in battle. Beautiful creatures of the Tittiri, Kalmasha and Gandharva stock. All these with their superb trappings he lost to Sakuni. Then he gambled away his men-at-arms and his army of sixty thousand troops. Last of all he flung away the rest of his jewels, the finest of all, each gem worth five *draunikas* of the purest gold leaf.

By this time the excitement in the hall was intense. All other players had ceased their games and had

Vidura b e g s  
Dhritarashtra t o  
stop the play.

crowded round Yudhishtira's table. Clutching at the arms of his gold throne or excitedly groping in the darkness for one of his sons who would tell him what was happening, Dhritarashtra stared out across the pavilion. The fixed gaze of his sightless eyes and the set grin of malicious joy and satisfied avarice made his face look horrible. As he had heard Sakuni's quiet words, 'I have won' continually repeated, he had seemed more than once to be about to leave his seat and stumble across to where he knew stood the unworthy son whose happiness meant more to him than the prosperity of his race. His was a terrible figure; and, as the spectators craned their necks to gain some glimpse of what was happening at the gambling table, they shuddered at that eager sightless face.

When he had lost his jewels Yudhishtira had sunk back in his chair staring in impotent rage at the group that faced him. It was during this pause that Vidura approached his brother. 'Maharaja, be warned', he

pleaded. 'I know that my advice is as displeasing to you as medicine to a sick man. But listen to me. Duryodhana's wickedness will bring us all to ruin. Do you remember, brother, how at his birth the jackals and asses howled and the birds of prey screamed and hooted round your palace? He is a jackal whose presence in your house spells woe for us all. Well would it be for him if he remembered that those who climb to steal honey must beware how they descend. Maddened with his jealous lust for the wealth of the Pandavas, he fails to see the consequences of his greed. He will prove the curse of his race. Maharaja, be wise. Sacrifice your unworthy son for the good of your race. What will you be doing? You will be giving a crow for peacocks. In exchange for a jackal you will be buying these tigers of men, the Pandavas who will defend the house of Bharata from all its foes. There was a king who had birds which laid golden eggs. In his hurry to get the gold the greedy king killed the birds. This is what you do. You destroy the sons of Pandu who can be for you and yours a source of continual wealth and profit. As the gardener takes care of the tree from which he picks the flowers that he sells, so, brother, pluck flowers of loyal help day by day from the Pandavas. Do not destroy the roots of your dead brother's tree with the fires of hatred and jealousy. Do you wish to die, you and your sons, that you thus provoke the wrath of these invincible heroes?'

He paused for a moment. The Maharaja had flushed angrily at the first words attacking Duryodhana.

Vidura denounces  
Duryodhana. Then he had held his head between his hands. Now he sat silent.

Vidura turned to the gamblers and cried out: 'Hear me, princes of the house of

Bharata, nothing but evil can come from this match. Gambling is the cause of strife. It results in ruin for some, in hatred and disunion for all. You, Duryodhana, stir up hatred in the hearts of your kinsmen who will take a dreadful vengeance on you all. You are bringing ruin on your own family, and you, Dhritarashtra, you eagerly applaud your son who leads you into the abyss. Listen before it is too late. Save yourselves from the fire of destruction that will flame out around you when, cheated of their wealth, the sons of Pandu seize their weapons to take vengeance for their wrongs. Who will save you at that hour? What advantage will it be to you to win the wealth of the Pandavas? Win their affection instead. That will be of far more value to you than their gems and their gold. This Sakuni is a rogue at dice. He cheats Yudhishtira. Order him to go and stop this perilous game.'

Still the Maharaja sat silent. But Duryodhana angrily retorted: 'We know you, uncle, as our enemy. Of the Pandavas you have always been fond and now you declare yourself. We have nourished a serpent in our bosom. You turn against those who have befriended you. There is no graver sin than to injure one's benefactor. Are you not afraid to commit this sin? You have insulted and slandered me. You have asked my father to destroy his own son? Do you expect him to listen to such wicked advice? We do not want any advice from you. You go too far in your abuse. We are all in the hands of God. What I do, what I wish is His will. My actions are ordered by Him. They are as right and natural as the flow of water down hill. Here in the palace you have had shelter, you have been treated with affection, yet you always have been the friend of our foes. You are like an evil-hearted woman who

will forsake her husband, however tenderly she is treated. Be gone where you will.'

'Dhritarashtra, can you sit silent while your son thus abuses me?' asked Vidura angrily. 'Have you no shame that you listen to such words without rebuking him? As for you, Duryodhana, it is useless to argue with any one as evil-hearted as you are.' Then, turning again to the Maharaja, he said: 'if you, brother, desire advice that will be pleasant to hear, in future you had better take counsel with women, idiots or neer-do-wells. The flatterer and the giver of bad advice can be found every day; but he who honestly speaks out for his friend's good is rarely met. The truest friend of a king is he who speaks out fearlessly and tells the truth, however unwelcome. Dhritarashtra, drink that draught that the honest will ever drain, but the dishonest shuns, the liquor of humility. It is a medicine bitter, pungent and distasteful, but it leaves the head clear. Drink it and end the intoxication of pride that is dragging us all to ruin. I wish you and your sons well as I have always. Now I will go. My last word is; Beware! the wise never provoke vipers that have venom in their mere glance.'

For the time play had ceased. Vidura's words had been received at first in astonished silence and then with angry shouts of defiance from Sakuni and his party and applause from those who wished the Pandu princes well. These latter sat silent and sullen through the din. When Vidura had left the hall, for a moment

Yudhishtira  
gambles away his  
kingdom, his  
brothers and him-  
self.

or two no one spoke. Then Duryodhana sneeringly said: 'Perhaps you wish to go with your friend and supporter. We are called knaves and jackals. Perhaps you are afraid to play any longer with such men. Do not let us detain you if you wish to go.'

बेवसीकारना, Furious at the sneering words, Yudhishtira replied: I called Sakuni a knave and knave he is. Such success as he has is only possible by fraud. But I do not fear you or any man. Play on if you please.'

So the game began again, and Yudhishtira recklessly staked and staked till his vast fortunes were gone. Then he began with his estates. All these he lost with the cattle and sheep and game on them. Sullen sat the four Pandavas biting their lips with rage but not venturing to dissuade their eldest brother from his madness. The Maharaja moved restlessly on his throne, turning first in the direction of one sound, then towards another, constantly asking what was occurring. On the seats the eager onlookers stood to see over the heads of those who crowded round the dice table. Every one knew that there was nothing left for Yudhishtira to stake now, but they did not realize the state of desperation he had reached. At each throw he hoped his luck would change; as each time he was worsted he was convinced that there must be a limit even to Sakuni's deceitful skill and that at last he would win. Now he sat silent angrily looking at his foes.

'Great king,' said Sakuni, mockingly, 'You have lost much. Let us play no more. There is surely nothing else that you can stake.'

For a few minutes Yudhishtira seemed lost in thought, his right hand supporting his chin, his eyes cast down. Then he looked up, his eyes flashing with anger. 'You would mock me, Sakuni. If it be my fate to lose all I have, so be it. No man may be stronger than his destiny. All my gold and jewels, my servants, my men-at-arms, my horses, elephants and cars, my cattle, sheep and game you have won. I would yet tempt fortune to befriend me. I will stake my kingdom against all your previous winnings.'



So saying he took up the dice box and threw—two fours : Sakuni beat him by one. On the haggard face of Yudhishtira gathered beads of perspiration, sign of his mental agony. His nerve had gone. Like a trapped animal he gazed wildly round as it were for an escape till his eyes rested on his four brothers. 'See, rogue,' he cried, 'on the princes are jewels worth crores. All these I wager for my kingdom.' Once more Sakuni won. There was another pause. Hearing that Yudhishtira had madly thrown away his kingdom, Vidura had come back into the hall and approaching the king implored him to stop the match. But Dhritarashtra had reached such a pitch of excitement, accentuated by his blindness and his eagerness to catch each fragment of conversation between the players, that he angrily ordered his brother to interfere no more.

At last exclaiming, 'If it must be, it shall be' Yudhishtira turned on Sakuni like a wolf at bay : 'Villain, your luck is supernatural. It is the will of God. I still have wealth untold left to me, what is more precious to me than gold and jewels and chariots. With my brothers I will play you. Nakula here, I stake him for my kingdom.'

The dice were thrown. He lost again. 'Curses on you !' he cried ; 'here is Sahadev so dear to me. Him I wager for Nakula and my kingdom.'

He lost once more. There were murmurs in the pavilion, but no one spoke. Yudhishtira's head drooped for a moment on his breast. The cunning Sakuni saw that the weary man needed fresh goading to rage. 'Your brothers the twins have passed under my control. But they are Madri's sons. You hesitate, I see, to risk Bhima and Arjuna.'

The bitterly cunning thrust was like a poisoned arrow in the breast of Yudhishtira. 'Black-hearted



dog', he cried, 'not content to ruin me, you seek to stir up strife between me and those dear to me.'

'When, O king, one is excited at play, one speaks thoughtlessly. Forgive the injustice that I did you,' said Sakuni with a sneer.

With a gesture of supreme contempt, Yudhishtira spoke again: 'I wager the hero Arjuna who has never known defeat in battle. Him I stake to win back my brothers and my kingdom.'

Once more the dice fell for Sakuni. 'You have but one brother left, the mighty Bhima. Will you wager him.'

'I wager him' answered Yudhishtira. Sakuni won again.

'Your wealth, your kingdom and your brothers are now mine. There is nothing else left for you to stake. The game must now end.'

'Not so' shouted Yudhishtira, 'You have my dear brothers. Have me now if your luck holds.'

Once more the dice rattled. Sakuni gained a five and six against Yudhishtira's two and three. The Pandavas were slaves, stripped of their jewels, their lands, their freedom.

The spectators gazed at the brothers with sad surprise.

Duryodhana and his brothers stared triumphantly at them. Even then the old king said nothing.

His foes tempt  
Yudhishtira to  
stake Draupadi.

'Surely, king, you have done wrong,' jeered Sakuni, 'to lose yourself while you still have wealth with which to gamble. Is there not one stake dearest of all to you as yet unwon? Is there not the peerless Queen Draupadi? Staking her, win back brothers and kingdom and your own freedom.'

Throughout the game the brothers had sat silent and motionless. Even when their jewels and their bodies had been bartered, no gesture, no murmur came as protest. Now there were signs that they could bear no more, that they would rebel against their elder's will, so sacred to them. But it was too late. With glazed fierce eyes Yudhishtira glared at his enemy. 'Yes', he said in hoarse low voice, 'I wager you with my beloved wife as stake'. There were loud cries of 'Shame! shame! what disgrace is this!' from the elders in the hall. Grasping the arms of his throne with straining fingers, Dhritarashtra stretched forward an eager face but spoke no word. Vidura, Bhishma, Drona and Kripa hid their faces in their hands. The dice fell to Sakuni's throw first—three and five. With trembling hand Yudhishtira cast—six and one. Draupadi was a slave!

Dhritarashtra, who had leaned forward to hear Sakuni's triumphant 'See! I have won' sank into his chair as if the excitement had completely exhausted him. One and all, the guests and spectators were murmuring at the disgrace that had overtaken the house of Bharata. Only the cause of it all, the shameless Duryodhana rejoiced at the success of his plot. Long and mocking was his laughter and, as he looked round the hall in triumph, he saw his uncle Vidura, his head bowed in his hands. 'I thought that you had bidden us farewell. Since you are happily still with us, you who have served us so faithfully, render us yet another service before you go. Go to the women's quarters and bring here the dearly loved wife of the Pandavas. Henceforward her duty will be to sweep the floors and her lodging will be among the servants.'

Vidura makes a last appeal to his brother.

Raising his head and sternly looking at him, Vidura replied : ' Miserable fool, have you entirely lost your reason ? Do you not dread the hatred of those whom you provoke ? I tell you, Duryodhana, you are on the edge of a precipice over which you will be cast. You are as a deer that would defy a band of tigers ? Are you so eager to visit the realms of Yama that you play with venomous snakes thus ? ' Then, turning to the Maharaja, he said : ' In my opinion Draupadi has not become a slave, for Yudhishtira staked her liberty when he had already lost his and was no longer his own master. Maddened with his jealous greed, this son of yours does not see how he plays with fire. He has not only cheated our nephews of their kingdom and wealth, he has said cruel and bitter words which they can never forgive. He has bought their wealth at the price of creating foes who will destroy him. As the bamboo bears fruit only when it is dying, so your son has inherited the wealth of his kinsmen with death awaiting him from their vengeance. Terrible will be the fate that will overtake him and you also if you will not listen to me. Restore their property to them ; give them their liberty and undo the wickedness of Duryodhana and Sakuni. Be warned, O king. The doom of the house of Bharata is at hand. Stop them before they insult Queen Draupadi before this assembly. For such affront there can be no pardon. Forbid them to go further in this matter. If you value your lives, repent before it is too late. ' Dhritarashtra made no answer, but Duryodhana shouted : ' Silence ! We want no more of your advice ' . Then to an official of the court he said, ' Go and fetch Draupadi. What do we care for the sons of Pandu ? '

Thus commanded, the attendant who was of the

Suta caste went to the women's apartments in that part of the palace set apart for the Pandavas and,

Draupadi is dragged into the pavilion by Dussasana. pushing aside the serving-maids who tried to prevent him entering, he walked rudely into the room of Draupadi. 'Princess, your lord

Yudhishthira,' he said, 'maddened with gambling, has played away his kingdom, his brothers himself and last of all you. Prince Duryodhana has won you. Henceforward you will be his servant. He has sent me to fetch you that he may give you orders as to the menial work you will for the future do.'

'Is there, *pratikamin*, a man so mad as to stake his wife at dice? You cannot speak the truth,' said the amazed Draupadi.

'I tell you that Yudhishthira first lost his kingdom, then all his brothers and himself and last of all, when he had nothing left to stake, he gambled away your liberty.'

'You say that he lost himself first. Go to the assembly and ask my lord.'

Sotheman returned and standing before Yudhishthira said: 'Queen Draupadi bids me ask you "Whose were you when you lost her in play?" But Yudhishthira sat silent.'

Then Duryodhana said: 'Let her come here and ask her question. Let us all hear what Yudhishthira and she say to each other'.

Once more the messenger went to Draupadi. 'Queen', he said, 'blame me not. I fear that ruin is coming on the princes of my house. Duryodhana wishes above all things to insult you by dragging you before the assembly and the Maharaja weakly yields to him in everything.'

Draupadi answered : ' If this humiliation is ordained for me, I will humbly submit to fate. But this is a question of morality. Let not the Kauravas forsake morality. Go once more and ask the assembly if I am to come. Whatever the elders think fit to tell me to do, that I will do.' Once more the Suta returned and put the question. But all sat silent. Then Yudhishtira sent a trusted messenger to Draupadi bidding her come before her father-in-law. Meanwhile the four brothers, sitting sorrowful and indignant but loyal to Yudhishtira, did not know what to do. Seeing their distress, Duryodhana rejoiced. In triumphant tones he bade the *pratikamin* go and bring Draupadi ; but the man only looked wildly round the hall asking, ' What shall I say ? ' Losing patience, Duryodhana said to his brother Dussasana : ' This Suta is a fool and is afraid of Bhima. You go and bring Draupadi here by force. '

Going to the women's apartments, Dussasana said : ' Come, Draupadi. You have been won by us. Come to Duryodhana and your new lords. '

Wild with shame and indignation Draupadi fled from him ; but Dussasana, running after her, seized her by her long hair, dragging her by it towards the hall. In an agony of pain and shame Draupadi cried out ' Wretch, let me go. Will you drag me into the assembly with but one cloth on ? ' But the brutal prince replied, ' Whether you have one cloth or are naked, you shall come with me. You have been won at dice and are our slave to live with our serving women for the future. ' Thus dragging the struggling weeping queen, Dussasana reached the hall.

With tears running down her face, with her long hair hanging dishevelled and her single cloth loosened, Draupadi stood before Dhritarashtra. In tones



trembling with anger she said : ' Is all shame dead in the race of Kuru ? Is there none here among these

The discussion  
as to whether  
Draupadi has been  
won or not.

kings and princes, these elders of learning who will rebuke you for this improper and brutal act ? All knowledge of Kshatriya custom must be dead among you since you sit quiet to see me insulted. For the time my lords can do nothing to protect me. They are bound by the rules of honour but they will never forgive this. They will crush you, if you had the gods themselves headed by Indra as your allies. Is the virtue of the house of Bharata quite dead ? Will not Bhishma or Drona or the high-souled Vidura protest ? And you, O Maharaja, how can you sit in silence while I am thus insulted and all the rules of morality are broken ? '

Thus with tear-stained face and in a broken voice Draupadi pleaded for decency and justice. As she spoke and looked towards them for the help to which she was entitled, the Pandavas were filled with a burning anger. To them the loss of their wealth, their jewels and even the kingdom meant no such sorrow as the sight of Draupadi humiliated and angry. Seeing her glance of appeal and knowing that the Pandava princes were helpless, Dussasana dragged Draupadi again towards the centre of the hall saying, ' Slave slave ! ' Duryodhana, Karna and Sakuni laughed loudly, but all the people in the hall were filled with shame and grief to see the princess so treated.

' I cannot answer your question. ' Bhishma replied ; ' One that has no property of his own cannot stake that of another. Yet wives are always the property of their husbands slave or free and must obey their orders. Yudhishtira can alone decide for you whether you are a slave. Dear though you are to him, his



decision will be just and right, for he will not be influenced by his love for you but only by the question of honour. He has said, "I am won." I cannot decide the matter. Sakuni has no equal at dice. Your lord staked willingly with him. Thus I cannot decide the question.'

Draupadi replied: 'My lord has been lured to this hall and, though he has no skill at dice, he has played with experienced and dishonest gamblers. How can it be said that he staked voluntarily? The son of Pandu, fooled by plotting rogues, has been defeated. He did not understand their tricks. I ask all here to decide the question.'

Seeing his wife thus ill-treated and insulted by Dussasana, Bhima could bear it no longer. Angrily he addressed Yudhishtira: 'The most desperate gambler does not stake his women of loose character whom he keeps in his house. Even for those he has pity. You have gambled away our kingdom, our heritage, the vast wealth that we had gained by our conquests and all that was brought as tribute at the *Rajasuya* sacrifice by the Raja of Kasi and the other princes. I bore your recklessness, for you are my elder and my lord, and it is right that I should submit to your will. But in staking Draupadi you have done an act that seems to me unjust unworthy and contrary to the laws of morality and family honour. By your vicious love of gaming you who should have been her tender and constant protector have exposed her to the cruelties and insults of these cursed men. All else I could bear, but this I cannot bear. I will burn your hands which threw the wretched dice. Sahadev, bring me fire.'

But Arjuna, springing up, stood between the brothers. 'Never before have you, Bhima, forgotten,'

he said, 'the respect and obedience due to our brother. Have you as well as our brutal foes lost all sense of morality? Yudhishtira, challenged to play, as a Kshatriya could not decline a challenge.'

Bhima sank back on his seat. 'You speak truly, Arjuna. I do wrong to address our brother so. But, if I did not know that he acted throughout as a Kshatriya, I would have burned his hands that have ruined us all.'

Then suddenly Vikarna, one of Dhritarashtra's sons spoke out. 'Great kings, it is right that you all should

Draupadi's  
clothes are miracu-  
lously replaced.  
Bhima's terrible  
oath.

consider and answer Draupadi's question. If justice is not done, great will be our punishment hereafter. Why do not the Kuru elders, Bhishma and Vidura speak?

My father, I beg you who are our king to answer Draupadi, and ye kings, each of you answer as he thinks proper.' But there was no reply: all sat silent. Then Vikarna went on: 'Monarchs, Kauravas, if none will speak, young as I am I will dare to say what is in my mind. Gambling is a vice by which if a man be fascinated, he becomes like one drugged with opium or drunken with wine. The act of such a man in such a condition is an immoral act by which others should not be allowed to suffer. My cousin gambled away Draupadi's liberty. That was an act of injustice, a wrong of which we ought to disapprove. But, besides that, Yudhishtira had lost his own liberty and was no longer his own master when he staked Draupadi. Therefore I do not think that Draupadi has been won.'

At these words there were shouts of applause from all the monarchs and princes present. Then Karna, with face contorted with anger, said: 'When all

your elders are silent, why do you offer your worthless views, foolish lad? Draupadi appealed to all here and the kings and princes sat silent, because they think that she has been fairly won. What is the value of your opinion? Who wants it? Yudhishtira staked all his possessions. Is not Draupadi one of his possessions? She was, besides, specially mentioned as his stake by the son of Pandu. How then is she not won? As to dragging her into the hall in a single cloth, what is there improper in that? She has many husbands, therefore she cannot be considered a virtuous woman, and even to strip her altogether could not be an insult. The Pandavas have lost all they had. Dussasana, do not listen to Vikarna who is merely a foolish lad. Take off the garments of the Pandavas, strip Draupadi. Let them be disgraced in the assembly.'

Thus encouraged, Dussasana approached Draupadi and caught at her cloth to pull it off. Clutching at it to save herself from exposure, Draupadi prayed to Krishna to aid her. 'O Govinda! O Lord! See how the Kauravas humiliate and persecute me. Help and protect me.' Krishna heard her prayer and, coming unseen into that hall, he stood by the side of the weeping princess, and as the wicked Dussasana pulled off her cloth another of the same kind covered her. The astonished spectators saw hundreds of robes torn from Draupadi, yet she was always clothed. Then there arose a great cry. 'Stop! Bid him stop! This cannot be. Are we to sit here and see this noble lady insulted and the gods defied? Surely Dussasana's act is sinful.' Trembling with rage and squeezing together his great hands, Bhima stood up and swore an awful oath. 'You Kshatriyas, hear my words! You have seen this dog of a Kuru insult Draupadi. Now I

swear an oath such as man never swore before. May my future be in hell if I do not kill in battle this foul wretch Dussasana and, tearing open his breast, drink his heart's blood.'

At these awful words there was a solemn silence for a moment, and then loud applause broke out. By this time hundreds of garments lay piled up round the weeping Draupadi, and Dussasana, tired and ashamed, sat down amid the hisses of the guests.

Draupadi makes  
a final appeal to  
the assembly.

Voices were heard from all directions. 'Why do they not answer her? Why does not Dhritarashtra speak?'

Then Vidura said: 'It is also your duty, kings and princes, to speak. Draupadi stands weeping here helpless before you. She appeals to you on a question of morality and justice. Vikarna who is young has answered her. Speak, all you who are learned and versed in the Vedas. You have no share in this quarrel and therefore you can view the matter impartially. It is for you to answer.'

But the kings remained silent, fearing Duryodhana. Thus encouraged, Karna said to Dussasana: 'Take away this serving-woman.' Dussasana seized Draupadi again and began to drag her from the hall. She struggled wildly and at last she fell down. Then, weeping bitterly, she addressed the assembly, 'This wretch drags me away before I have saluted these kings and seniors. Never since my *swayamvara* have I appeared thus before men. Yet my husbands sit silent while I am insulted. The elders of the Bharata race permit their daughter and daughter-in-law to be thus insulted. Is all morality and virtue dead that such things can happen? Once more I ask, am I, the wife of King Yudhishtira, princess of Panchala, a serving-maid or not? Answer me that.'

Then Bhishma replied: 'The matter is one difficult to decide. This is why Drona and these other elders sit with heads sunk on their breasts, grieving for the coming ruin of the house of Bharata, but unable to decide this difficult point of morality. Let Yudhishtira himself declare if he thinks you are won.'

There was a pause, but Yudhishtira made no sign. Then Duryodhana said: 'Draupadi, it is for your husbands to declare whether you are a slave or not. Let the four brothers declare before this assembly that Yudhishtira is not their lord; let them thus prove him a liar, then you shall be free. Let Yudhishtira himself say if he is your lord. According as he says, will you belong to the Pandavas or to us.'

These words were greeted by cheers from the Kauravas. Every eye was fixed on the Pandava princes. Bhima, rising, said: 'It must be known to you all that if Yudhishtira were not our elder brother and therefore our lord, those who have insulted us would not have lived to mock us thus. He is lord even of our lives. If he thinks that he is a slave, then we all are slaves. If this were not so, is there mortal man who would live a moment after touching those sacred locks of our queen? Once in the grip of these arms of mine, no hope is left for any man. Reverence for my elder brother and obedience to the rules of morality make me control myself. If he bade me, I would kill these miserable Kauravas as a lion would a pack of dogs.'

Then, as murmurs were heard approving Bhima's dignified words, Karna said to Draupadi: 'The slave, the son and the wife are always dependent. They can earn and keep no wealth, for all they have is their lord's. You are the wife of a slave who can own

Bhima replies for the four brothers to Draupadi's appeal.



nothing. Go then to the women's apartments. There proper menial work will be given to you. The sons of Dhritarashtra, not the sons of Pandu, are now your masters. Choose one of them as your lord. None of them at least will gamble away your liberty at dice. They have called the slave that was your lord just ; but what justice, what sense of decency can there be in a man who will stake a princess like you at the gaming table ?'

These words bit into the heart of Bhima who, groaning with humiliation, turned on his brother and said : 'How can I be angry at the words of this Suta ? Truly we are slaves ; but, brother, would our foes have been able thus to mock us if you had not staked the princess ?'

Then Duryodhana, turning to Yudhishtira who remained silent and motionless, said : 'Do you not hear your brother ? Speak now. Is Draupadi slave or free ?' So saying, eager to insult his victims to the utmost, he made an insulting gesture to Draupadi. Bhima sprang up. Stretching out his mighty arms towards Duryodhana he cried : 'May I be cast into hell if I do not break every bone in your body in payment for this insult.'

'You see, kings and princes,' Vidura said : 'how these foolish men play with fire. A dreadful doom is threatening the house of Bharata. Disregarding every rule of morality, the sons of Dhritarashtra have gambled with the son of Pandu. Now they act as mad men by insulting Draupadi. They are eager further to humiliate and disgrace those who will surely destroy them at last. If Yudhishtira had staked Draupadi before himself, she would be a slave. As it was, he could not stake her having lost himself. That is my opinion.'

Duryodhana insults Draupadi. The assembly is terrified by ill omens.



Duryodhana said : ' I am willing to accept the opinion of Bhima, Arjuna and the twins. Let them say that Yudhishtira is not their master, then Draupadi will be free.'

Arjuna replied : ' Yudhishtira was our master when he began to play, but when he had gambled himself away, whose master could he be ? '

At that moment suddenly there sounded the mocking hideous cry of a jackal in the homa-chamber of the palace. To that ghastly call responded the asses, and birds of prey shrieked and hooted overhead. With frightened faces the kings and princes started to their feet. Panic seized on all at those terrible cries of warning. The place was in confusion in a moment, and Vidura cried loudly, ' Heaven help us ! The doom of the House of Bharata is at hand ! '

When the jackal's cry began, Dhritarashtra half rose from his throne ; then, as the din of ill-omened sound increased, he sank back into

The terrified king gives back their liberty, kingdom and wealth to the Pandava princes.

his seat covering his face with his hands. When the last echo of the sounds had died away, he turned his sightless eyes towards where Duryodhana stood. ' Curse of my house ! ' he cried. ' Do you hear those sounds of woe ? Upon us all your evil-minded jealousy is bringing destruction. Alas ! weak fool that I am that I should sit here to let you insult those of my blood.' Then turning towards Draupadi, he said : ' Princess, forgive, I pray you, the insults that you have suffered. I am to blame. Ask me a boon, first of my daughters-in-law'.

' If you will grant me a boon, liberate Yudhishtira.' ' Let it be so ' said the king. ' I would grant you another boon. My heart yearns to show my affection.'

Then she asked, 'Give me the liberty of Bhima and Arjuna and the twins with their cars and bows. Let them all be free.'

The king said, 'Be it so. Yet ask again, for you are dear to me. I wish to grant you a third boon.'

But Draupadi said: 'Illustrious king, I do not deserve a third boon. Covetousness brings a loss of virtue. It is said that a Vaisya may ask one boon, a Kshatriya woman two, a Kshatriya man three and a Brahman a hundred. My husbands are freed from slavery. More than that I do not ask, for they will achieve fortune for themselves.'

Loud were the words of praise on all sides at Draupadi's words. Karna exclaimed: 'This princess has saved the Pandavas. Surely such wifely devotion has never been seen.'

Bhima, hearing this, asked Arjuna in great sorrow: 'How can we bear these insults? Let us now kill these accursed men who have humiliated us all. Now, even now I will slay them all and Yudhishtira will reign without a rival.' Glaring round him, the hero was about to spring at Karna when Arjuna appealed to him to control himself, and Yudhishtira, embracing him, said: 'Brother, be silent. Do nothing, I command you.'

Then, approaching Dhritarashtra and placing his hands between the Maharaja's hands, Yudhishtira said: 'King, you are our master. Tell me what we shall do.'

The Maharaja replied: 'Yudhishtira, go and rule your kingdom in peace. All is restored to you. You are ready to take advice, you are not like Duryodhana who would never listen to me. The noblest men bear no ill will; they do not remember injuries done them, but try to see good in their enemies. They bear no

enmity. My son, the best men do good without hope of reward. They do not treasure up memories of injuries or harsh words but forgive their foes. Go in peace. Forget the unkindness of Duryodhana. Forgive him and turn with affection to me and mother Gandhari who wish you well. I am an old blind man, but my heart is good towards you. I allowed the game at dice to take place, for I wished to know who were the true friends of our house and to test the natures of my children. I know you now as a great-hearted and dutiful prince. I know that Bhima and Arjuna and the twins are worthy brothers of a just man. Happy are the people who have you as their king. Return in peace to Indraprastha. Think kindly of your cousins. Let there be no enmity between you.' Having thus spoken, Dhritarashtra dismissed Yudhishtira who with Draupadi and his brothers, mounting their cars, started for their city.

While the Maharaja had been speaking there were angry murmurs from Duryodhana, Sakuni, Karna and the others. When Yudhishtira

The weak king is again persuaded to allow a new game at dice. He orders the princes to return.

and his brothers had gone, they came forward and begged the Maharaja to hear them. At the sound of his son's voice the old monarch seemed to regain some of the calmness he had shown before the jackal's ill-omened cries had terrified him into giving back their liberty, their kingdom and all to the Pandavas. Speaking in a carefully respectful quiet way, (for the prince had been frightened at his father's fierce outburst against him), Duryodhana pointed out that the quarrel had gone too far to be made up by soft words, that either they must destroy the Pandavas or the latter would destroy them.

'It is sheer folly,' he said, 'to give back wealth and power to those who must always be our foes. With their riches let us rather buy allies among the kings. Then we can make war against the sons of Pandu. Do not deceive yourself. After what has happened, it is as hopeless to expect friendship from the Pandavas as it would be to expect it from angry snakes. Armed and mounted in their cars the princes, like venomous snakes, will undoubtedly kill us. Even as they went there could be no mistaking their fury, for Bhima whirled his heavy mace and Arjuna looked to his bow and his quivers of arrows. Their cars were driven off quickly. Soon they will gather their forces. Do you think that injuries such as they have received can be forgiven? Is there one among them who will forgive the insult to Draupadi? My father, it cannot be. You love us your sons. Is a brave father to be frightened out of his paternal love by the howl of a hundred jackals, the hooting of a thousand owls? Recall the sons of Pandu. Let us gamble again. This time the stake shall be whether they or we are to go into exile. Those who lose shall wander as beggars dressed in skins in the woods for twelve years. The thirteenth year shall be spent in some inhabited country, but they must live unrecognized. If any one knows them, then they must live in the jungle for a second term of twelve years. Let them or us go into such exile. Let the game begin. If they lose (and they will, for nobody is more skilled at dice than Sakuni) then during the thirteen years we shall be able firmly to establish ourselves on the throne and gain many powerful allies. Thus we shall be strong enough to defy the Pandavas when they return.'

Once more the blind old Maharaja weakly listened to his wicked son. After a few minutes silence he said:

‘Let it be so. Send swift messengers after the Pandavas to bid them return.’

The elders, Bhishma, Vidura, Drona and the others implored Dhritarashtra : ‘Do not do this. Let there be peace.’ But the spell of his son was on him and he would not listen. Then his wife Maharani Gandhari, in a voice broken with anxiety, pleaded with him. ‘Vidura told you on the day of Duryodhana’s birth that you should kill him. The baby made cries like a jackal and those horrible creatures howled around the palace. Listen no more to the wicked advice of this disgrace of our race. You will bring us all to ruin. Who but a madman breaks afresh an embankment that has been mended or relights a burned house when the fire has been put out? Why do you needlessly provoke the sons of Pandu? Though he is my son, I see that Duryodhana’s heart is utterly evil. Do not listen to him; for, if you do, he will bring ruin on us all. If we gain all the wealth of the Pandavas, will it profit us? The wealth that is acquired by wicked and covetous acts is a curse, not a blessing. Reign in peace and goodwill that your sons may enjoy your good fortune after you.’

But Dhritarashtra was deaf even to his wife’s counsel. ‘Dear wife’, he said, ‘if fortune is to forsake us, if ruin is coming, be it so. I do not desire to resist fate. Let our sons have their way. Let the Pandavas return and play at dice again.’

Dhritarashtra’s messengers, travelling in the swiftest cars, overtook the sons of Pandu on the road to

Indraprastha and, approaching Yudhishtira with reverence, said : ‘The game is renewed, and the Pandavas are doomed to twelve years exile.’

‘O king, our master Maharaja Dhritarashtra bade us tell you “Return and play once more.” Then Yudhishtira said to his brothers :



"This is our fate. Good and evil come by God's will. Let us return, for it is a challenge and moreover it is the command of the king. I feel that it is my ruin, but I cannot refuse." So saying Yudhishtira ordered the chariots to return to Hastinapura. Silently and sadly, as men who knew that their doom was at hand, the princes obeyed their brother and re-entered the pavilion where once more all were assembled to see the play. Then Sakuni approached Yudhishtira and, inviting him to sit at the gaming table, said: "Mighty son of Pandu, Maharaja Dhritarashtra has restored to you your kingdom and your freedom. For those stakes we will play no more. But Duryodhana and others believe that you sons of Pandu and they cannot both reign in peace. Therefore have they begged their father to invite you back that we might play for a new stake, which of you two families of princes shall be exiled. Whoever loses this game will retire to the woods and live there for twelve years. During the thirteenth year they may live in an inhabited country, but if they are recognized by any one, then they will suffer a further term of twelve years banishment. Do you accept the wager?"

Then arose an uproar among the princes. They all cried out: 'Shame! Shame! What is this persecution of the Pandavas? Are Duryodhana and his friends mad that they look for danger thus? Do they long for death that they act like those who are demented?' Yudhishtira heard these protests, but he faced his foes quietly, too proud to refuse a challenge, though he knew that it meant his ruin. To the wicked Sakuni he replied proudly: 'How can you think, Sakuni, that I, who am ever strict in observing the rules of my order, can refuse a challenge to any contest? Be it as you say: I accept the terms. Let it be banishment for us or for the sons of Dhritarashtra.'



Then, taking up the dice box, he threw two fives. But the magical dice fell to the throw of Sakuni two sixes. Triumphantly Sakuni shouted: 'You have lost, Yudhishtira, you have lost. Be gone to banishment.' Duryodhana and his friends laughed long and loud, but the elders wept at the triumph of fraud and hatred.

Slowly Yudhishtira rose from his seat at the dice table and prepared to leave the hall. He was sure that he had been cheated. But he

The Paandavas  
prepare to go into  
exile in the woods.

had accepted the challenge; he could prove nothing against Sakuni; and as a Kshatriya he was too proud to bewail his misfortune. Nobly and silently he submitted to an undeserved and cruel fate. Behind him stood the four brothers ready, uncomplainingly, to share his exile. Most of the guests were sorry for the sons of Pandu and respectfully made way for them, murmuring blessings on them and prayers for their safe return from exile. But Duryodhana and his supporters insulted them and with harsh words mocked their misery. 'Heaven be praised!' said Dussasana; 'henceforward Duryodhana will have no rival. The eldest son of the eldest Kuru has won supreme sovereignty as is right and proper. The arrogant sons of Pandu who laughed at him are now in the dust, beggars doomed to wander in the pathless woods. Now they must put aside their robes of state, their jewels and ornaments. They have lost all. Dressed in deer skins, living on jungle roots and fruits our proud friends are now of no more importance than sesame seeds. It would be well if Draupadi were freed from such pauper husbands. She had better choose a new lord from among the Kauravas. These fallen heroes in their rags and their poverty are not fit mates for her.'

Hearing these mocking words, Bhima cried : ' Evil-hearted dog, you can boast now and insult us without fear, because fate and the rules of honour compel me to control myself. Make the most of the triumph that the knavery and cunning of Sakuni have made possible. But as surely as I now live and suffer bitter humiliation from your cruel words, so surely will I kill you and all who persecute us.'

The shameless Dussasana, certain that Bhima could not hurt him, only laughed more and, dancing in front of the Pandavas, cried, ' Cows! cows!'

' Dance now as much as you like' cried Bhima. ' May I never reach the regions of the blessed if I do not kill you in battle and, tearing open your breast, drink your life's blood.'

Then Duryodhana, laughing loudly, walked in front of Bhima, mimicking his stride. ' You fool,' said Bhima, ' do you think such antics clever? I tell you that the day will come when I will smash the life out of you with my mace and put my foot on your head.' At which Arjuna cried : ' No idle boasts are these. In the fourteenth year from this day will we bloodily revenge these insults. The earth shall drink the blood of Duryodhana, Karna, Dussasana, Sakuni and all the cursed sons of Dhritarashtra.'

Passing out of the pavilion, the five princes went to bid farewell to the Maharaja. Around Dhritarashtra sat the elders of the Kuru race, Vidura, Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and the others. All were very sorrowful when Yudhishtira, bowing reverently, said : ' Maharaja, grandfather and kinsmen, we go to the woods. After the allotted time we shall return. Farewell.' The Maharaja and all around bowed their heads in acknowledgment, but no one spoke. Shame made them silent.

'The queen your mother', Vidura at last said, 'is old and feeble. It is not right that she should dwell in the woods. Surrounded by reverent attentions she will live in my house.'

'Be it so,' the Pandavas said: 'We look upon you as our father and your word is law.' Then Vidura, addressing Yudhishtira, said: 'My son, you have suffered defeat; but you have been conquered by cunning and there is no disgrace in such a defeat. You and your brothers are dear to one another, you are happy when you are together. Therefore your exile need not be sad. You will have the comfort of the love of your dear wife and you will be consoled by that knowledge which you were taught by the *rishis* of old. Control your anger; bear no ill will, but submit to destiny as the wise man always patiently does. You have done no wrong. There is no reason why you should bow your head in shame or repentance. Go in peace. May the blessing of heaven rest on you all. We hope to see you return in safety.'

While the princes bade farewell to the Kuru elders, Draupadi was saying goodbye to the women. Weeping on her neck, Queen Kunti bewailed her sons' misfortunes. Then she said: 'Dear child, do not grieve. Now is the time when the devoted wife is so great a blessing to her husband in trouble. You know your duty. Go in peace. Consoling your lords and guarding their health, be the light of their life.'

Then, weeping and beating her breast, she walked with the princess out of the palace. When she saw her sons clad in deer skins with their heads bowed surrounded by jeering enemies and pitying friends Kunti embraced them all. 'Noble and high-minded, there is no reason for you to be ashamed, my sons' she said. 'The calamity that has befallen you must

be due to my evil *karma*; for what have you done to deserve such woe? Alas! if I had known that such sorrows were to befall us, I would never have brought you from the woods when your father died. Happy Pandu! happy Madri! to have escaped such sorrow. How can I let you go? I will go with you. Ah! Lord Krishna, who are without beginning and without end! Why do you not save me and my sons from these woes? Show mercy to these noble men who have done no man wrong but are driven from their homes by the jealousy and cunning of bitter foes. Pandu! where are you that you bear patiently the sight of your children thus driven into the woods?’

The princes comforted their mother and persuaded her to return to live with Vidura. Slowly and reluctantly the weeping queen went back to the women's quarters where Maharani Gandhari and the ladies of Dhritarashtra's household sat weeping at the insults that Draupadi had suffered in the hall.

When the Pandavas had gone, Dhritarashtra was very anxious as he sat thinking of all that had happened in the gaming pavilion and of the dangers which would threaten his sons when the period of banishment was ended. That night he could not sleep but sat thinking sadly of the ruin that was coming on his family. In the morning he summoned Vidura. ‘Brother, I am very sorrowful,’ he said: ‘Tell me, how did my nephews leave the city, how did they look, what did they do?’

‘Yudhishtira’, replied Vidura, ‘went away covering his face with his cloth. Bhima stretched out his arms and looked at them. Arjuna scattered grains of sand around him. Sahadev's face was smeared with

Dhritarashtra  
repents of his  
weakness. His  
fears for the lives  
of his children.

ashes and Nakula had covered himself with dust. Behind the king walked Draupadi covering her face with her uncombed hair. Their priest Dhaumya had kusa grass in his hand and muttered the *mantras* in honour of Yama.

'Tell me, brother' Dhritarashtra asked, 'What does that mean? Why did they go away thus?'

'You and your sons,' Vidura replied, 'have robbed him of his wealth and his kingdom; yet Yudhishtira bows patiently to his fate. Angry though he is, he covered his face fearing that he would burn the people by looking at them with angry eyes. Stretching out his great arms, Bhima has said to himself, "There is none my equal in strength. Some day I will take a fearful vengeance." Arjuna, the greatest of all bowmen, scattered grains as he thought of the arrows that he would shoot in all directions when he meets your sons in battle. With heavy heart Sahadev has besmeared his face that none might recognize him in his day of sorrow. Nakula threw dust on himself in the bitterness of his humiliation. Draupadi went with uncombed hair, dressed in one piece of stained cloth, thinking: "In fourteen years the wives of those who have inflicted such suffering on us shall enter this city as I leave it, weeping for their husbands and sons." Dhaumya chants the *mantras* to Yama in anticipation of the day when the Brahmans will sing the *Sama mantras* for the dead Kurus. As the princes went, the crowd followed them calling out "Sad is this day when we see the noble sons of Pandu banished from their homes because of the covetousness of the Kurus." As our nephews walked away jackals and wolves, vultures and owls screamed, howled and hooted from the temple courtyards and holy tree tops and from the walls and roofs of the city. Surely will destruction

descend on our house because you have listened to your black-hearted son.'

While they spoke Narada with other great *rishis* appeared in the palace. Narada said : 'Maharaja, in the fourteenth year from this date because of your sin the Kauravas will all be destroyed by Bhima and Arjuna.' In a moment, before the echo of the words died away, they were gone. The unhappy king could bear no more ; he fell from his throne in a swoon. When he recovered consciousness, he sent for his sons and told them of Narada's awful words. Even Duryodhana was terrified and he and Karna went to ask Drona's advice.

'The sons of Pandu', said Drona, 'cannot be beaten in battle. You ask my help and I will do what I can. But no one can resist fate. The Pandavas have gone to the woods. There they will live for twelve years. In the fourteenth year they will return in anger and will take a terrible vengeance on you all. With the aid of Raja Drupada and their other allies they will kill us all. I am destined to be killed by Dhrishtadyumna, Drupada's son, in revenge for my act in depriving Drupada of half his kingdom. For none of us do I see any hope. You, Duryodhana, have gained your ambitions and have no rival in the kingdom. But death will come for all of us through your fault. Your triumph and happiness will last but a moment as in the cold season the shadow of the palm tree rests but a short time at its base. No matter what sacrifices you make, the vengeance of those whom you have persecuted will overwhelm you.'

The princes went back to the king and told him all that Drona had said, and Dhritarashtra said : 'Truly has the tutor of the Kurus spoken. Send messengers quickly after the Pandavas to bring them back. If



they refuse to come, at least let them go to their kingdom in peace and enjoy all that is rightfully theirs.'

But Duryodhana secretly set aside his father's orders, saying: 'It is useless. Do not send. Let us enjoy the triumph we have won.'

Sad at heart Dhritarashtra sat in his palace and to him came Sanjaya asking: 'Why are you sad? You reign in peace over the whole king-

Dhritarashtra  
bewails his fate.  
Vidura's advice.

dom, having banished the sons of Pandu. What troubles you now, Maharaja? 'Is it not cause of grief

enough for me', Dhritarashtra replied, 'to know that my sons must meet in battle the mighty Pandavas?'

'For this you are to blame', Sanjaya said. 'Whose fault but yours is it that this war is certain and that the destruction of all Kshatriyas will come about? Though you were given prudent advice by Bhishma, Drona and Vidura, you listened to the evil voice of Duryodhana. You allowed him with the help of the cunning Sakuni to rob his kinsmen and you sat still when their beloved wife was dragged into the assembly. To me you seem mad. I believe that you are under a curse. It is said those whom the gods wish to destroy they first send mad. To your diseased mind the gods have made evil seem good and good evil. Disaster and ruin come thus to a man in disguise, so that he may not take alarm. Destruction does not come with upraised club to smash in one's skull. When a mortal is doomed, the gods put him off his guard thus, so that, thinking evil good and good evil, he may rush down the slope of temptation into the sea of ruin. All the sorrow that is coming to you will be the result of the wickedness of Duryodhana. He persuaded you to order the Pandavas to come to play at dice. Shamelessly and brutally he had the princess of Panchala

dragged into the assembly and insulted before strange men. With her tear-dimmed eyes she appealed to her lords; but, bound by the rules of Kshatriya honour, they were unable to help her. Mad in their pride and knowing that she was helpless, Duryodhana and Dussasana spoke insulting words to her. Do you think that such conduct can be forgiven? What can you expect but fearful consequences from wrongs so grievous? Remember that you sat silent when your nephews were robbed and insulted.'

Dhritarashtra moaned, rocking himself backwards and forwards in his anxiety. 'Do you think' he asked, 'that even a single one of my sons will outlive the day of vengeance? On seeing Draupadi dragged to the pavilion, Queen Gandhari and my daughters-in-law wept aloud. Even now they cry every day at the insult done to their sister. Angry at the treatment of Draupadi, the Brahmans would not perform the *agnihotra* ceremony. A great storm of wind blew and the sun was eclipsed, terrifying the people. Our war chariots took fire mysteriously and their flag staffs were burnt and fell. Jackals cried in the sacred fire chamber of Duryodhana and asses brayed around it. It was when I heard that frightful omen that I granted the boons to Draupadi. I set them all free. I restored their kingdom and wealth and bade them go in peace. Afterwards, tempted once more by my son, I would not listen to the advice of Vidura, who advised me to make peace on any terms. I thought that Duryodhana was right when he said that, whatever I did, the sons of Pandu would never forgive the insult offered to Draupadi, that we must destroy the Pandavas or they would destroy us. Now I see that I have acted sinfully and there is nothing but ruin and death awaiting me and mine.' While the king spoke thus, Vidura

came to him to comfort him. 'Tell me what you advise,' said Dhritarashtra anxiously. 'You know, brother,' replied Vidura, 'that to me all the sons of the Kuru race are dear. I have had no favourites. But I must tell you that the wickedness of Duryodhana is a grief to me. Of him and his conduct I cannot approve. The wrongs that you have allowed the sons of Pandu to suffer are very great. There is only one way to put right those wrongs. Restore to Yudhishtira his kingdom and wealth. Nothing but evil can come from covetousness. Disgrace Sakuni for his roguery and thus make amends to the Pandavas. When first I knew of the quarrel, I advised you to stop it quickly, but you would not listen to me. Now matters are far worse. The deadliest foes have been created for you and your family by the treatment of the sons of Pandu. Is there any hope for you in battle with them? What man can withstand Arjuna armed with the magic bow Gandiva or Bhima wielding a mace like that of Yama? When Duryodhana was born, the bad omens were so dreadful that I advised you to have him destroyed. All this woe has come because you would not then listen to me. Send for him now. Tell him to make his choice, either he must consent to reign in peace with the sons of Pandu or he must go. If he will be friendly towards them, their wrath may be appeased. Send Duryodhana, Sakuni and Karna to the Pandavas to ask their forgiveness. Let Dussasana in public assembly ask the pardon of Draupadi and of Bhima, and let Yudhishtira be installed again on his throne with every honour. If to these measures Duryodhana will not consent, then banish or destroy him and instal Yudhishtira as the sovereign of the whole kingdom. He has the best claim to the throne. He is just and upright and will reign well. In this way only can you save your family from destruction.'

'Vidura, I see,' replied Dhritarashtra angrily, 'that Duryodhana is right. You love the Pandavas, not us. Your advice is given in their interests. How can you expect me to accept such counsel? You have never been a father. Perhaps that is why you speak so unreasonably. How can you think that I will abandon my son for the sake of the sons of Pandu? In a way they are my sons also, but Duryodhana is my own flesh and blood born of my body. Who will abandon his own body for the sake of others? I see that you are secretly my enemy. The evil woman forsakes her husband, however kindly she be treated. It is even so with you. Stay or go as you will. Your advice seems to me that of a foe rather than a friend.' Rising from his seat Dhritarashtra went quickly into the inner apartments. Vidura, left alone, sadly walked away saying to himself, 'Our race is doomed'.

Having bade their mother farewell, the Pandavas with Draupadi and fourteen servants, left Hastinapura by the Vardhamana gate. They were followed by a crowd of sorrowful citizens. 'What safety is there for us under such a ruler as Duryodhana?' they cried. 'Cruel and covetous, he has shown his real nature in his treatment of his kinsmen. Let us leave the kingdom and follow the sons of Pandu, who are merciful and noble-hearted.'

When Yudhishtira saw the crowd he said: 'Brothers, happy indeed are we in the love of the people.' Then, turning to the citizens, he said: 'Dear friends, it is pleasant to us to know that you love us and to hear you lament the base treatment we have received. But do not desert your homes. In Hastinapura dwell Bhishma, Vidura, Queen Kunti and many of those who are dear to us and wish us well. Therefore

The Pandavas  
go into exile in the  
woods.

go back there and serve loyally those whom we love. In this way you can best show your devotion to us.'

Then, in obedience to him the people, calling down blessings on the princes, returned to the city and the Pandavas drove to the bank of the Ganges where beneath a huge banian tree they spent the night. So sad were they that they took no food; they drank the sacred water only. With them were many Brahmans who had followed them from the city. When morning came Yudhishtira spoke to them kindly, saying that for the future he and the princes must live in the woods on fruits and roots and such game as they could kill, that the jungle was full of dangers from snakes and beasts of prey, and he begged them to return. But the Brahmans refused to desert the princes. Then, setting out from the bank of the Ganges, the Pandavas went to the field of Kurukshetra, and, performing their ablutions in the sacred streams, they passed from one forest to another, travelling in a westerly direction. At last they reached the woods of Kamyaka on the banks of the Saraswati and there they took up their quarters.

When Dhritarashtra had dismissed Vidura, the latter, eager to see his nephews, drove after them and found them in Kamyaka, sitting together with the Brahmans. Welcoming their uncle the princes asked: 'Why do you come? Do you bring another challenge to play from the rogue Sakuni?' Vidura then told them what had happened and how Dhritarashtra had dismissed him. 'Surely destruction will overtake the Kurus, for Dhritarashtra will never listen. As medicine is distasteful to a sick man, so was my good advice unwelcome to Dhritarashtra. He said: "Go where you like". So I have come to you to say this, "He is wise who bears patiently the wrongs done him,



but in the meantime makes plans for revenge, adding to his weapons and drilling his soldiers, while he bides his time." Even as men turn a small fire into a large one, so he who acts thus will at last rule the earth. He who when he is rich shares his wealth with his supporters will find them willing to share his troubles. My noble-hearted nephew, be patient and brave. Hold fast to your principles. Happiness will some day be yours.'

When Dhritarashtra heard that his brother had gone into the woods, he was very sad. 'What have I done?

Dhritarashtra  
once more repents  
and sends for  
Vidura.

What madness is it that possesses me that I should insult my best friend and wisest adviser? Surely some evil fate compels me to plan the ruin of the family.' For hours

he sat in thought, dreading the vengeance of the Pandavas. Then, summoning Sanjaya he said: 'My brother has been driven by me from the city, my brother whose advice has always been wise, who has always been my true friend. Seek him and bring him back to me.' Knowing that Vidura had gone into the woods to join the Pandavas, Sanjaya found him there and said: 'Vidura, the Maharaja grieves because he has been unkind to you. He has sent me to bring you back.'

So Vidura returned and, when he approached the Maharaja, Dhritarashtra said: 'Happy I am that you forgive me and return. When I heard that you had gone, having been driven away by my harshness, I could not sleep.' 'I have forgiven you,' said Vidura. 'I have hastened back at your command, and I am eager always to be your counsellor and friend. It is natural that all good men should feel sympathy for those in distress. This is why I am anxious to have



justice done to the sons of Pandu. Otherwise your sons and they must be equally dear to me.'

But Duryodhana suspected his uncle and he was vexed when he heard of his return. 'He loves the Pandavas', he said to his friends, 'and he will try to persuade the Maharaja to recall them. If I see them again here, I shall take no food or drink and shall kill myself. To see them prosperous is more than I can bear.'

'There is no reason,' Sakuni replied, 'for you to worry. The Pandavas have gone to the woods for twelve years. They will never break their pledge and return, for they are men of strict honour. Even if the king recalls them, they will not come. But, if they did, we could defeat them again at dice.' 'My advice' said Karna, 'has always been for a bold course. Duryodhana is our chief and we ought to do what he wishes. He will never be content until the Pandavas are destroyed. Let us arm ourselves and, mounting our cars, go to the forest and kill all the five.'

As they were starting, the rishi Vyasa appeared and rebuking them forbade them to go. Then, entering the king's chamber, he said: 'Dhritarashtra, it grieves and angers me to learn that, having been cheated at dice, the sons of Pandu have been banished by you to the forest. When the thirteen years are past, they will come and take a bloody revenge. Why does your evil-minded son wish to kill the Pandavas? Let the fool be restrained. If he tries to kill them, he will only lose his own life. Quarrels with kinsmen are sinful and forbidden. Therefore you must put a stop to them. If you cannot control your son, great harm will come. Or let him go alone to live with the Pandavas. Perhaps thus better feelings might be created between them.'

'O holy one,' replied Dhritarashtra, 'I did not like the game at dice; but I believe that it was my fate to consent to it. Nor did Bhishma, Drona or Vidura or Gandhari approve. But you ask what is impossible; I cannot cast off my son.'

'It is true,' said the sage, 'that there is no possession as dear as a son. But the Pandavas are also as it were your sons; you ought to try to have as much affection for your dead brother's children as for your own. Specially ought you to be kind to those who are in distress. If you wish the Kauravas to live, you must compel Duryodhana to make peace with the sons of Pandu.'

Then Vyasa went away; and when the Maharaja and his son were alone together there appeared the rishi Maitreya. He told the Maharaja that in the woods he had seen Yudhishtira and his brothers clad in deer skins, their feet bare and their hair matted and uncombed. 'King, I heard from them', he said, 'of the game at dice and how they had lost their kingdom and were banished. Your sons must not quarrel. You did wrong to allow the game and the insults in the pavilion. As for you, Duryodhana, you must not quarrel with the Pandavas. They are like gods armed with celestial strength. Bhima has slain rakshasas. With his hands he has killed the mighty Kshatriya monarch Jarasandha. With the help of their allies, Drupada and his kinsmen, they will be so strong that you cannot hope to overcome them in battle. Make peace with them before it is too late.'

But Duryodhana, smiling and insolently slapping his thigh, paid no heed.

'Since you will not listen to my warning, but only treat my advice with insolence, I tell you that in the great war which you are provoking Bhima will smash that thigh of yours with one stroke of his mace.'

The frightened Maharaja begged him to revoke the curse, but the rishi said, 'If Duryodhana makes peace with his cousins, only then will my curse not take effect.'

After living for some time in the forest of Kamyaka the Pandavas travelled to the sacred lake called

The life of the  
Pandavas in the  
forest.

Dwaitabana, and in the woods on its banks they dwelt for years in company with many Brahmans. The forest was dense and richly wooded with many great trees, salas and mangoes, palms, peepuls, tamarind, and teak. Fruits grew there in abundance and the cool shaded air was fragrant with the scent of flowers of every colour. In the thicker parts of the forest wandered herds of elephants. Every kind of deer and game lived in the woods, and birds of all kinds, peacocks, golden pheasants, the sweet-voiced koil, parrots of lovely plumage, swans, cranes and waterfowl, filled the air with their cries. In this sylvan paradise the sons of Pandu led lives as simple as those of cowherds. They slept on beds of grass; they bathed in the lake, and spent their days hunting the deer or in gathering the fruits of the forest. In the clearing by the lake's edge they had their camp, where Draupadi cooked their food, giving meat first to the Brahmans and then to her lords. For five years they lived this simple life, rising with the dawn and, armed with bows and arrows, chasing the deer. In the evening they sat round the fire and talked of their misfortunes and made plans for the future.

Yudhishthira's brothers and Draupadi were discontented and at night as they sat by the fire they often tried

Yudhishthira  
refuses to break  
his word of  
honour.

to persuade Yudhishthira to break his word. They asked him to return to Hastinapura before the thirteen years had passed, attack the Kurus and seize the kingdom. They said that they had

been cheated, that it was by cunning and fraud that Sakuni had won, and that it was not necessary to keep faith with those who are dishonest. But Yudhishtira said : ' It is true that we have been cheated out of our kingdom and wealth, but it is right to keep faith even with rogues. Blame me as much as you wish. All our troubles have come from my folly and my ambition. I wished to deprive Duryodhana of his half of the kingdom. It was for that we staked. I was proud and selfish and I hoped to win. But it is useless to regret what has happened. I am certain that our present condition is God's will. You all know the stake for which we played. I accepted that stake and therefore we must live in these woods for twelve years. Having given my word in the gambling hall before every one, how can I break it even for the sake of the greatest kingdom on earth? A man of honour must always prefer to die rather than gain a kingdom or any worldly wealth by breaking his word. It is useless for you to speak harshly to me. I feel our misfortunes as much as any of you. It was shame and misery to me to see Draupadi insulted and to be compelled to do nothing. When I think of it, my body burns as if I had drunk corrosive acid. But I have given my pledge in the presence of the Kauravas and all the kings and I cannot break it. Have patience! Let us live here till happier days come for us. We must wait bravely as the farmer, when he has scattered seeds, must wait for the harvest. Revenge is sweet and our revenge will be the sweeter because we are true to our word and because punishment will fall on Duryodhana just as he is most prosperous, just as he is reaping the full benefits of his covetousness and sin. Then our revenge will be complete and our fame will spread over the earth. Friends will gather round us and our enemies will fear us and

submit to us. My word is sacred. I can never break it, even though my promise was obtained by cheating. A man's honour should be more valuable to him than life. Kingdom, sons, fame, wealth, life itself, these cannot count against truth. At all costs a man must abide by the truth.'

After several years spent in the woods, the princes with Draupadi, their servants and many Brahmans were advised by the *rishis* to spend some years in pilgrimages to shrines and holy places. So they left the

The Pandavas go on pilgrimage.

forest and went eastward. First they visited Naimisha. Then, having stayed in Kalakoti and the Vishaprastha hills, they reached Vahuda where they washed in the sacred waters. Next they went to Prayaga, where they bathed at the junction of the Ganges and Jumna. Thence they went to Veda living there awhile, and then to Mahidhara. Near there is a hill called Gayacira and the river Mahanadi. On the hill is a *tirtha* called Brahmasara where they fasted and worshipped, performing the Chaturmasya sacrifice. Thence they travelled to the asylum of Agastya and lived for a time in Durjaya. One by one they visited the sacred spots on the shores of the sea and many other sacred places till they came to the holiest of all known as Surparaka. Then, crossing the plains by the sea, they reached a forest wherein the gods had practised asceticism. Returning to Surparaka, they went to Prabasha and then to the Payoshni in which holy water they bathed. Thence they went to the Hill of Sapphires and the river Narmada on the banks of which they visited many sacred shrines. After they had seen Mount Mandra, they went to Ghandamadana. On their way thither they saw lakes and rivers and crossed mountains covered with mighty trees and flowers and fruit. Living only

on fruits and roots, the heroes walked through rough and desolate country where there were many beasts of prey. At last they reached the mountains inhabited by the sages. As they climbed, a violent wind blew bringing with it clouds of dust. For some time they could see nothing and had to take shelter from the storm under trees. For many months they lived on the slopes of Gandhamadana under the shade of a huge jujube tree, living a simple life of prayer and devotion in the sacred groves. Afterwards they visited Himavan, living on the food of *rishis*, juicy fruits, pure honey and flesh of deer killed with unpoisoned arrows. They dwelt there for four years. Thus they had spent ten years of their exile. Then they went to Kailasa. Afterwards, crossing the Himalayan regions and the countries of China, Tukhara, Daradu and Kalinda they reached the capital of Suvahu. Thence they visited the great mountain near Yamuna where they dwelt for a year. In the twelfth year of their banishment they went to the banks of the Saraswati and thence returned to the forest of Dwaitabana.

While they dwelt in the forest of Dwaitabana, there came to their camp a certain Brahman who was on his way to the court of Hastinapura.

Duryodhana plans to go into the woods to mock the Pandava princes.

When he reached that city, he was received by the Maharaja and told him how the sons of Pandu lived in the woods, sleeping on the ground and hunting their food by day. Then

Dhritarashtra mourned over his nephews. 'What perverse fate,' he cried, 'is it that has brought on us all this disastrous quarrel? My heroic nephews, accustomed to palace life, lead the lives of beggars. Bound by their brother's pledge, Bhima and Arjuna for the time dwell quietly in the woods; but they can never



forgive the cruel words of my sons, or the insults to Draupadi. Their hearts are burning with hatred as a bundle of burning straw eats up a faggot of dry wood. When the term of their banishment is completed, how can my sons resist them in their wrath? The hour of the destruction of the Kurus is approaching. The bowman Arjuna, armed with the magic bow Gandiva, will take a cruel revenge on us all.'

Sakuni heard these words and he told Duryodhana the news of the Pandavas. Then he said: 'What greater happiness is there than, when you yourself are prosperous, to see your foes in misery? Yudhishtira's wealth is now yours; the whole kingdom is yours. To you all the kings of the earth pay homage. Let us go now to the woods and mock the sons of Pandu. Let them see you in your glory surrounded by your court. Let us deride them. It will be pleasant to see the boastful Bhima clad in deer skins. Take your wife, for the sight of her in her jewels and costly robes will be almost more bitter to Draupadi than to be dragged half naked into the assembly by your brother.'

Duryodhana wished to go, but he knew that his father would not allow it, for Dhritarashtra was always grieving over the fate of his nephews. 'Nothing would be more pleasant to me', he said, 'than to see Bhima and Arjuna living in the forest in poverty and misery. But what excuse shall we make? My father will know that there can be no reason for our wishing to go to the woods of Dwaitabana except to destroy or to deride the Pandavas. My happiness in my prosperity will be increased immensely if I can triumph thus over my cousins and see them in their misery. I should rejoice to see Draupadi in rags and to show my greatness to them all in their affliction. But what

excuse can we make? Think of some plan and, when I am sitting with my father, come and make the suggestion.'

So that evening when Duryodhana sat with his father, Karna and Sakuni came to the Maharaja's room. Soon afterwards a cowherd, who had been secretly instructed, arrived to report about the royal cattle farms. Then both Sakuni and Karna said to the Maharaja: 'The season has arrived for numbering the herds that now pasture around Dwaitabana and branding the calves. With your permission we will go to inspect the herds and to hunt in the forest.'

'It is right', answered the Maharaja, 'that the herds should be inspected and hunting is ever a pleasant pastime. But I have heard that the sons of Pandu now live in the Dwaitabana district. It will be well, I think, for you to avoid those woods. Yudhishtira is a man of the most strict honour. He will never break his pledge. But Bhima and Arjuna may be so angry at the sight of you that they will attack you. Even if you avoid giving offence, an accident, such as a quarrel between one of your soldiers and one of their attendants may provoke strife. I do not think that it will be safe for you to go there.'

Both Duryodhana and Sakuni assured the Maharaja that there would be no danger, that the Pandavas would strictly adhere to their promise and that they themselves would not go to see them and would avoid all cause of offence. On this assurance the Maharaja gave permission unwillingly. Then, attended by a splendid retinue, Duryodhana, Karna, Sakuni, Dussasana and their women with many cars, elephants and horses, with foot soldiers, Brahmans, bards and others, started for the woods.

On reaching the forest the royal camp was pitched by the Dwaitabana lake in the shade of great trees.

The Pandavas  
rescue Duryodhana  
from the  
Gandharvas.

Duryodhana inspected the herds and had them numbered and the calves branded. Then the hunting began and the princes killed deer, boars, hyaenas, bears and buffaloes in great numbers. Thus at last Duryodhana reached the part of the forest where the sons of Pandu dwelled. Then he gave orders for pleasure houses to be built by the lake edge. But, while his attendants were preparing to carry out his orders, some Gandharva soldiers appeared and told them that their king was coming to make merry in the forest and that they must go. When they returned and told Duryodhana this, he was angry and sent more soldiers bidding them say that he was coming and that he claimed the forest for himself. But the Gandharvas only laughed and said that Duryodhana must be mad to defy their king thus. So both parties prepared for war and Chitrasena, King of the Gandharvas, led his men against the Kurus who were driven off in disorder. After a desperate fight Duryodhana, Dussasana and all their party were taken prisoners. Some of the Kuru troops, flying for their lives, found the Pandavas. They told them that Duryodhana and all his people were being taken away prisoners, and asked for help. Bhima did not want to rescue them, for he was glad that they had been defeated by the Gandharvas. But Yudhishtira said: 'This is no time for harsh words. In their terror the Kurus appeal to us. Quarrels such as that in our family cannot sometimes be avoided, but the honour of a family is sacred. If a stranger insults the honour of a family, every member must fight to protect it. The capture of Duryodhana and the women of our house

is an insult that we must avenge. Therefore go now. First try to persuade the King of the Gandharvas to give up his prisoners. If he will not listen to reason, use force. You ought to be proud to have it in your power to help Duryodhana humbly asking for your aid.'

So Bhima, Arjuna and the twins hurried to the assistance of their cousins. There was a sharp fight and Duryodhana was rescued. Taken before Yudhishtira, the latter received him kindly and said : 'I am glad that we have helped you. Do not be so rash again. Go back to your capital happily.'

This was a great humiliation for Duryodhana. He was overwhelmed with shame and he went back to Hastinapura in sadness, for he did not know what to say to his father. It was bitter for him to owe his life to his foes, and he felt that it was difficult for him to face the people and the Kuru elders. But Karna laughed at his shame and told him that the Pandavas were bound to rescue their sovereign. He advised that this was the proper time for Duryodhana to make war on neighbouring lands, so that his victories might spread his fame abroad and show the Pandavas how powerful he was. So he besieged the city of Drupada and extorted a large indemnity from the Raja and his allies. Then, marching north, he conquered the kings there. Then he defeated Bhagadatta and all the kings inhabiting the Himavat. He conquered the Angas, Bangas, Kalingas, Mandikas, Mithilas and Magadhas. Having taken Batsa-bhumi, he conquered Kevali, Mrittakavati, Tripura and Kosala. Having conquered the Avantis, he won the west and returned in triumph to Hastinapura. Proud of his victories, Duryodhana wished to perform the *Rajasuya* sacrifice, but the priests said that it could only be performed by one member of a family. While Yudhishtira was alive,

no one of the race of Bharata could perform it. He was advised to perform the *Vaishnava* sacrifice which vied with the *Rajasuya* in splendour. So it was decided and Duryodhana invited the Pandavas to be present. Yudhishtira sent a polite message that they could not break their pledge and come. Bhima said: 'Tell Duryodhana, we will come at the end of the thirteenth year when Yudhishtira will, in the sacrifice of battle, pour upon the sons of Dhritarashtra the clarified butter of his wrath.' The sacrifice was carried out with great splendour.

When they had completed the twelve years of banishment in the woods, Yudhishtira called his brothers together and said: 'The

The Pandavas complete the twelve years of banishment.

thirteenth year has come when we can live where we like but on the condition that no one recognizes us. Where shall we go?' After discus-

sion it was decided that they should take refuge in the kingdom of the Matsyas whose ruler, Raja Virata, was an old and kind-hearted man. But then there was the question of how they were to disguise themselves. Yudhishtira decided to pretend to be a Brahman named Kanka, fond of gambling and to seek a post as courtier to amuse the king. Bhima resolved to be a cook called Vallava and work in the royal kitchen. Arjuna said he would be a minstrel and teach singing and dancing to the women of the royal household. Nakula determined to be a groom and horse-trainer under the name of Granthika; while Sahadev with the name of Arishtanemi said he would be a cowherd. Draupadi resolved to be a *sairindri* skilled in hair-dressing. When they had made their plans, they sent their family priest Dhaumya to Raja Drupada's capital to maintain the *agnihotra* fires; while Indrasena



with the empty cars, the servants and utensils was ordered to go to Dwaraka. Then, when they had bidden farewell to Dhaumya and their servants, the five princes and Draupadi, went towards the river Kalindi. Passing through Yakrilloma and Curasena, leaving on the right the country of the Panchalas and on the left that of the Dasarnas, they entered the Matsya country. When they reached the city, they had to get rid of their weapons which would alarm the people, particularly the famous bow Gandiva. Not very far from the city was a huge *sami* tree. Arjuna proposed that the weapons should be hidden there, for it was a lonely spot requested only by beasts and snakes and was close to a cemetery. So they took off their bows and swords and Nakula climbed the tree and hid them in the topmost branches, tying them underneath the boughs so that they should not suffer from the rain. Then unarmed they agreed to separate and each to wander into the city alone.

Yudhishtira went straight to the palace and waited in the courtyard till he was noticed by an attendant to

whom he said that he wanted service with the Raja. He was taken before Virata who asked him who he was. The Pandavas take service with the King of the Matsyas.

'I am called Kanka and I am a Brahman of the family known as Vaiyaghra. I am skilful at dice and gambling. I would wish to be ever near you to amuse you.' The good-natured king engaged him at once. Then Bhima, disguised as a cook by the name of Vallava, presented himself and obtained work in the royal kitchens. He told the Raja that he was also a wrestler and a strong man who could amuse him by fighting with wild beasts. Draupadi, dressed in old cloth and with her hair braided and hidden under her shawl, wandered in the



'palace compound till some one asked her who she was. 'I am a king's *sairindhri* and I seek work.' Then she was taken before the Rani and told her that she could dress hair, pound and prepare unguents, make garlands and do needle-work. 'I seek my living and am content to work for that. They call me Malini,' she said. She was engaged by the Rani to work among her women. Disguised as a cowherd and imitating the coarse speech of such men, Sahadev loitered round the cow-pens till he was noticed and given work among the royal herdsmen under the name of Arishtanemi. Dressed in the showy garments of the professional singer and dancer, and decked with the heavy gold ornaments of his trade, Arjuna presented himself for employment and was appointed to teach dancing to the Raja's daughters and to sing to the court. Last of all Nakula arrived. He found work in the Raja's stable as a groom under the name of Granthika. Thus in disguise the Pandavas began to live for the pledged twelve months in the kingdom of the Matsyas.

Everything went well with their plans. Yudhishtira became a great favourite of the Raja, and the other brothers did their work satisfactorily. Virata was specially delighted with the strength and bravery of his new cook. He used to set his strongest men to wrestle with Vallava, but they were always beaten. Then he would match Vallava against wild animals, tigers and even elephants. Thus more than ten months of the year had passed away when a tragedy occurred which almost betrayed them all. Even in her servant's dress Draupadi's beauty was very striking. One day the Rani's brother Kichaka, a great soldier and the Commander-in-Chief of the Matsya army, saw her and

The Pandavas are almost betrayed owing to the murder of Kichaka.

fell in love. When he spoke to her, thinking that she was only a servant, Draupadi was very angry and told Bhima. He lay in wait for Kichaka one night and killed him. The next morning, when the general's body was found, there was a great hue and cry. Every one in the palace knew that Kichaka had been paying attention to Draupadi, and suspicion fell on Vallava who was suspected to be her lover. But nothing could be proved against Vallava, and after a time the danger that the Pandavas would be discovered was at an end. Vallava remained a favourite of Virata, and rumours of his wonderful strength and how he battled with the fiercest beasts and the strongest men reached Hastinapura and other cities. Every one had soon heard of Raja Virata's marvellous cook-wrestler.

As soon as the thirteenth year began, Duryodhana had sent out spies to try to find the Pandavas. Going

Duryodhana's  
spies search  
vainly for the  
Pandavas.

first to the forest of Dwaitabana, these men followed the charioteers as far as Dwaraka and the priest Dhaumya to the capital of the Panchalas. But at neither city could they obtain any news of the princes. For months they searched throughout the neighbouring kingdoms, but without avail. At last they returned to make their report. 'We have searched in the forests and on the mountains,' they told Duryodhana, 'but we heard nothing of the sons of Pandu. It seems probable that they have perished without leaving a trace. One piece of news we learned. Kichaka, the famous leader of the armies of the Matsyas, has been killed by some one at night mysteriously.'

Then Duryodhana sent for Karna and his brothers and told them his fears. 'All through the kingdoms my spies have searched in vain. The thirteenth year

is nearly over now. If we cannot find them during the few weeks that are left, they will have fulfilled their pledge, and they will return to kill us all.'

'All that you can do', Karna replied, 'is to send other spies more clever and more shrewd than these men. Tell them to go everywhere, making enquiry of the learned and searching in the hermitages of ascetics. They must look in caves and visit shrines and holy places. They must seek the Pandavas in mines and holes in the ground. Let no village however small, no palace however luxurious and exclusive, be closed to them. Send such spies out in great numbers. There is nothing else that can be done.'

Dussasana agreed that spies must be sent but said that he believed that the Pandavas would never be found; that, certain that they would be recognized, they had crossed the seas or had killed themselves.

While they consulted thus, Susarman, chief of the Trigartas, leader of the armies of the Kauravas in many wars, arrived. When he heard that the mighty Kichaka was dead, he begged Duryodhana to invade the country of the Matsyas. 'No hero like him now serves Virata. The land is full of cattle and corn and much wealth in jewels. My country and yours have suffered much from Kichaka. Let us now take revenge.' This advice was considered wise and orders were given for the Kuru army to march against Matsya. Susarman, with men mounted on swift horses, went ahead to seize the cattle.

Now it was just at the time that news of the invasion of his territory reached Raja Virata that the twelve months of the thirteenth year were completed. The five princes had all pleased the king and he had no servants whom he valued more highly. No one in Matsya suspected who they were; and now their troubles

The Kurus  
invade Matsya.

were at an end, for no longer need they fear being driven into the forest for another twelve years. But still they did not reveal their identity. They were arranging to throw off their disguises when the frightened herdsmen came to the court to tell the king that the cattle were stolen. Virata ordered his army to prepare and when they heard the news the four princes begged that they might be allowed to fight. Arjuna, who lived in the women's apartments, could not ask for this privilege. So Yudhishtira, Bhima, Nakula and Sahadev were given armour and weapons, and marched out to meet the Trigartas. A fierce fight took place and Virata was taken prisoner by Susarman but was rescued by Bhima who seized Susarman by the hair and threw him on the ground so violently that he became unconscious. When their chief had been taken prisoner, the Trigartas army fled and the victory was complete. Virata was very grateful to the four Pandavas who had fought so bravely and prepared to march back to his capital in triumph. But before he arrived, news reached the city that in the north the Kurus had invaded the kingdom and were driving off thousands of cattle. The Raja's younger son Uttara, a mere youth, encouraged into thinking himself a hero by the flattering women and girls, started out with Arjuna to act as his charioteer. When he faced the Kuru army, he was so frightened that he leaped from the chariot and ran away. But Arjuna ran after him and, catching hold of him by the hair, dragged him back to the car. Telling him not to be frightened, he drove to the *sami* tree. When they got there, he told Uttara to climb the tree and fetch him the bow Gandiva. When the lad saw the wonderful weapons hidden in the leaves, he was amazed and asked, 'To whom do these weapons belong?'

' They belong to the sons of Pandu, the high-souled Yudhishtira, the mighty Bhima, Arjuna and the twins.'

Uttara was puzzled, and asked, ' But where are they? I have heard that they lost their kingdom at dice and that after living for some years in the woods, they have disappeared with their lovely wife Draupadi. How did you, a singer, know of their weapons? '

Then Arjuna replied, ' I am Arjuna. Your father's courtier and dice-player is Yudhishtira. His strong cook Vallava is Bhima. Nakula is one of his grooms and Sahadev one of his cowherds. In the Rani's palace lives Draupadi, the *sairindhri* for whose sake Kichaka was killed by Vallava.'

Then the astonished Uttara rejoiced greatly and, acting as charioteer for Arjuna, he drove bravely into the battle. When Arjuna was seen coming holding the great bow, the Kauravas suspected that it was

Arjuna defeats  
the Kurus.

Arjuna. Drona, whose car was near to that of Duryodhana, pointed out certain ill-omens which had occurred before the battle. When they had calculated the time, Bhishma declared that it was now the full thirteen years and that, as everything promised by the Pandavas had been exactly fulfilled, Arjuna was no longer afraid to show himself. True to the rules of Kshatriya honour, they had lived in the woods and concealed themselves for a year, but that now they must be faced in battle or the kingdom must be given up to them. Duryodhana said that he would never give back the kingdom. So, on the advice of Bhishma the army was divided into two parts, the one to escort the cattle and the other to give battle to Arjuna. This advice was adopted. Arjuna, armed with Gandiva, drove straight at the Kuru army. First he killed Sangramajit,



Karna's brother. Then he fought the latter and drove him off the field. Next he put to flight Kripa. Then he fought and wounded his old tutor Drona, after which he was attacked by Drona's son Aswatthaman whom he defeated. Once more attacked by Karna, again he drove him off the field. Next he met and defeated Bhishma who was driven wounded from the battle. Duryodhana was the next to be attacked. Arjuna wounded him in the breast. His brother Vikarna and his elephant being killed, Duryodhana fled, Arjuna mocking him as he drove away. Thus the Kuru army was conquered and put to flight. Arjuna pursued them and, aiming an arrow at Duryodhana's jewelled crown, broke it in pieces.

When he saw the Kaurava army in retreat, Arjuna turned back towards the city. As they drove, he told Uttara not to tell his father who he and his brothers were, but that he was to claim the victory as his own. First they went to the *sami* tree and hid again the bow Gandiva and Arjuna's sword and other weapons. Then, braiding his hair again, after the manner of dancers as he had worn it for a year in the palace, Arjuna took the reins once more and entered the city in the character of Vrihannala.

Raja Virata and the four Pandavas had returned some time before from their victory over the Trigartas.

When the Raja reached his palace, he asked where his son Uttara was. When he was told that the lad had gone to fight the Kuru army which

Virata has  
news of Uttara's  
victory.

had driven off thousands of cattle to the northward, Virata was sure that Uttara must be dead or a prisoner. 'Let an army go quickly to help him' he commanded. 'He is inexperienced in war and against such warriors as the Kuru princes and with no one but a minstrel



and dancer as charioteer, I fear that he is certainly dead.' Hearing the news, Yudhishtira could not resist saying: 'Do not fear, O Raja. If Vrihannala is the prince's charioteer, Uttara will have defeated the Kurus and rescued your cattle.' Almost while they spoke the cowherds brought the news that Uttara had won a great victory, that he had driven off the Kaurava army and rescued the cattle. Guessing what had happened, Yudhishtira said: 'No wonder that Uttara has won. Anybody could win who had Vrihannala as his charioteer.'

The Raja was very glad at the news and gave orders that the city was to be decorated with flags, that sacrifices were to be made in all the temples and that the citizens, priests and soldiers were to go out to greet the prince as he entered the city. Then a crowd of musicians with cymbals, conchs and trumpets, drummers and Brahmans with garlands, with maidens to strew flowers in his road, went out to welcome Uttara. Meanwhile Virata, very excited and happy, called Draupadi, saying, 'Sairindhri, fetch the dice. I will gamble with Kanka.'

Virata strikes  
Yudhishtira.  
Uttara's honesty.

But Yudhishtira tried to dissuade him, saying, 'It is not well for a man excited as you are with joy to play with a cunning player such as I am.'

But Virata was recklessly happy and said: 'Whatever you say, I shall play. I feel inclined to gamble away all my slave girls and cattle and gold, so glad am I that Uttara has defeated all the heroes of the Kaurava army.'

Yudhishtira replied, 'There is no reason for surprise. Why should he not defeat them since he had Vrihannala as charioteer?'

That was the third time Yudhishtira had said this

and Virata grew angry. 'What do you mean, miserable Brahman, by constantly saying this? Do you compare a dancer and minstrel with my son? I forgive you this time, but never speak so again.'

Yudhishtira only smiled and said: 'I tell you, Raja, that if Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Karna and all the Kuru heroes were together, no one but Vrihannala could fight them all. There is no one equal to him in battle. With such a man as his assistant, your son could not fail to conquer.'

Then Virata, very angry, said: 'I told you not to say that again'; and, picking up a dice, he struck Yudhishtira in the face, making his nose bleed. At that moment the trumpets sounded outside announcing the arrival of the victorious Uttara. Yudhishtira whispered to the messenger not to let Vrihannala enter, for he feared that if Arjuna saw him bleeding that he would at once attack Virata. Uttara entered and was embraced by the Raja. Then, seeing Kanka's face covered with blood, he asked, 'What is this? Who has done this outrage?' The Raja who was still angry replied, 'I have struck this foolish Brahman: When I was rejoicing at your triumph, he would persist in saying that you had only conquered because Vrihannala, the dancer, was with you.'

'Father, you have acted very sinfully. Ask Kanka to forgive you. What greater calamity is there than a Brahman's curse?' Then when Virata spoke gently to Yudhishtira, that prince replied: 'I have forgiven you. I am not angry. I know how easy it is for those who have power to act unjustly without thinking.' Shortly afterwards, when the blood had stopped, Vrihannala was brought in and, having saluted Virata and Kanka, he stood silent. Then the Raja began to praise Uttara. 'What a hero I have for a son! What

courage you have shown, Uttara, in facing that child of the Sun, Karna, and Bhishma and Drona and Duryodhana, that mighty warrior! How happy I am that you have recovered all my cattle and driven my foes in disgrace from the field.'

But the prince was an honest lad and he could not bear to listen to his father's praise. At last he said: 'It is not I, father, who have rescued the cattle and conquered the enemy. A youth of godlike appearance, seeing me running in fear from the Kauravas, stopped me and took me with him back on to my car. He it was who won the victory; he it was before whom the Kuru heroes fled as sheep before a wolf.'

Then Virata said: 'Where then, my son, is this godlike hero? Bring him to me that I may see and thank my benefactor and the protector of my son.'

'He disappeared' replied Uttara, 'as soon as the victory was won, but I think that we shall see him in a few days.'

After three days, the thirteen years being complete, the Pandavas decided to tell Virata who they were.

The Pandavas  
tell Virata who they  
are.

They went to the *sami* tree; and, taking off the dresses they wore as the servants of the king, they dressed themselves in their own robes and, armed with the weapons that had been hidden in the tree, they walked to the palace. There they entered the council hall and took their seats on the chairs set aside for princely guests. Then Virata arrived to hold a Durbar. When he saw his five servants dressed in royal robes and armed sitting in the places reserved for royal guests, he was surprised and angry. 'What is this?' he cried 'My servants dressed as princes? You Kanka, how dare you sit here, you a mere professional

gambler?' Yudhishtira did not reply, but Arjuna, wishing to have a joke with the astonished king, said: 'This dice-player, Raja, is really a very great man, worthy to sit on the same throne as Indra. Devoted to the Brahmans, knowing the Vedas, a man of strict honour, one who never breaks his vows, he is also a mighty warrior. His fame has spread over the whole earth.' Then, as the amazed Raja was on the point of interrupting the strange speech, Arjuna said: 'You see before you Yudhishtira, hero of the race of Bharata, eldest of the sons of Pandu. At the head of thousands of cars he used to ride into battle; hundreds of minstrels have chanted his praises. The kings of the earth have paid him tribute. Protector of the poor and sick, thousands of Brahmans depended on him for their food. A noble-hearted man and a just ruler, he is worthy to sit in a royal chair.'

'If he indeed be Yudhishtira,' said the astonished Raja, 'where then are Bhima, Arjuna and the twins? When they had lived for twelve years in the woods, the sons of Pandu disappeared, and no one has since heard of them.'

'We are all here,' replied Arjuna. 'Vallava your cook is Bhima. It was he who killed the evil-hearted Kichaka as he had killed tigers and boars for your amusement. Here is Nakula your groom and Sahadev your cowherd. Your queen's *sairindhri* is Draupadi, and I am Arjuna. In your service we have safely passed through the year of concealment.'

Then Virata, stepping down from his throne, embraced each prince in turn and welcomed them with kindly words. Laughing gladly, Uttara said: 'I told you, father, that the godlike youth would come again. It was Arjuna here who rescued the cattle and defeated the Kauravas, scattering them as a lion would a herd

of deer.' Then Virata said: 'Great indeed is my debt to the sons of Pandu. Arjuna saved my son and rescued my cattle. I owe my life and liberty to Bhima. To you all I owe my victory. Happy fortune is mine that has given me such unknown guests whom now I and my subjects will delight to honour. Great son of Pandu, pardon me that in my ignorance I have offended you. Henceforward my wealth and my army and even my whole kingdom is yours. Thanks be to the gods that you are safe after your banishment and that you have completed the cruel terms imposed on you by Duryodhana. All I have is henceforth yours. To Arjuna I would like to give my daughter as wife.'

But Arjuna said, 'Gladly I accept your daughter as daughter-in-law. For a year I have lived as her dancing master within the palace and I was liked by her as her teacher. It is therefore not right that I should be her husband, but my son Abhimanyu will marry her.'

Then Virata assigned to the Pandavas palaces and estates. The news that they were alive and living in Matsya soon spread and the kings began to gather in Virata's capital. Raja Drupada with his son Dhrishtadyumna came and the Raja of Kasi marched there with an army. Krishna arrived and with him came Indrasena and the cars of the Pandavas and thousands of elephants and soldiers and Vrishni and Bhoja, chiefs of great fame. Then the wedding of Uttara, Virata's daughter to Arjuna's son took place amid much rejoicing and the palace was filled with the sound of cymbals, conches, horns and drums; and a great banquet was served with flesh of deer and rich wines in jars of gold and the people gave themselves up to merry-making.



When the marriage celebrations were at an end, Virata summoned a council of the Pandavas and the royal guests to consider what ought

A council is held  
to decide on what  
is to be done.  
Krishna's speech.

now to be done by the Pandavas.

The first speaker was Krishna. 'It is known to us all,' he said, 'that in a game of dice Yudhishtira was

cheated out of his kingdom and exiled with his brothers to the forest. Though they could have defended themselves, they would not break their word. Without a blow for their rights, they went to the woods and lived there for twelve years. During the past year, in fulfilment of their agreement, they had to disguise themselves and hide somewhere. They did so at this court where they have done menial work in Virata's household. Having kept their vow, they now claim the return of their kingdom. We must consider now, what it is best to do. Yudhishtira is a man who would not covet any other's possessions. But here his claim is clear. Yet he does not wish to be harsh. He has been compelled to pass years of misery in the jungle and, if he wished to take revenge for this, with the help of his brothers and friends he could conquer the Kauravas in battle. But Yudhishtira is not vindictive or cruel. Though he has been wronged, he still wishes to avoid war and he asks only for what is his. His wish to treat Duryodhana in a friendly way is the more noble when we remember that from the days of their boyhood Duryodhana has made treacherous plots to kill him and his brothers. Yet Yudhishtira, who has no anger in his heart, would forgive the sons of Dhritarashtra if they will give back half the kingdom. The Pandavas have carried out their promise strictly. Therefore Yudhishtira could claim the whole kingdom. In accordance with the terms of the wager he could



compel Duryodhana and the Kauravas to surrender all their territory and wealth and go into banishment. But Yudhishtira does not ask for that. He asks only for restoration. We do not know what Duryodhana will do, and, until we do, it is difficult for us to form our plans. My advice is that a trustworthy ambassador be sent to Hastinapura to ask in friendly words for half the kingdom.'

Next spoke Krishna's brother Valadeva. He pointed out the clear rights of the sons of Pandu and that the offer Krishna proposed would be

Other speeches.

a generous one. Duryodhana should consider himself lucky that he had so generous a foe and that the matter could be settled thus without war. That might restore the whole kingdom to the sons of Pandu or it might not. Conciliation was the better course. Let the ambassador speak humbly and politely, so as not to provoke Duryodhana who was now firmly established in the kingdom. Yudhishtira had brought his troubles on himself. He had persisted in gambling, though he was not skilful. He had played with Sakuni who was one of the cleverest of players. If he had lost all, that was no fault of Sakuni but due to his recklessness. Let the messenger speak in a conciliatory way so that Duryodhana may not be offended but may agree to give up half the kingdom and so settle the quarrel.'

'Every man can only speak according to his nature. There must always be cowards and brave men even in one family, just as on a tree there may be branches that bear fruit and some that are barren. I do not, therefore, condemn you, Valadeva,' said Satyaki, 'but I condemn those who listen patiently to you. How can any man sit still and hear Yudhishtira blamed for what happened at the game of dice? He is a man of honour, he

was challenged to play and, believing Duryodhana and his friends as honourable as he is, he accepted the challenge. If the case had been reversed and Yudhishtira had invited them to his house and challenged them, their winnings would have been honestly won. Yudhishtira had to obey the laws of the military caste; he could not refuse to play. He was cheated and had to accept humiliating conditions. He has fulfilled those conditions and he is now entitled to the whole kingdom. Why should he humble himself? There is only one way of approaching Duryodhana and that is with sharp arrows. I, for one, am ready to fight to the death for the sons of Pandu. If Duryodhana will not keep his promise, then let us make war on him and his brothers and kill them all. There is no sin in killing those who wish to kill us, but to humble yourself before foes is degrading and infamous. Either let Duryodhana restore the kingdom or fight.'

'I agree with Satyaki,' said Raja Drupada. 'It is certain that Duryodhana will not give up the kingdom because he is asked politely. Dhritarashtra who worships him will never make him give it up, nor will Bhishma or Drona who will be weak and agree with the Maharaja; nor Karna, Sakuni and the others who will encourage Duryodhana to fight it out. It is a waste of time to use kind words to such a man as Duryodhana. Bad-hearted, cruel and unjust, he will think that the man who approaches him with mild words is a fool or a coward. If conciliation is used, he will think that he has won a victory. To be friendly to such a man is useless. Let us prepare for war. Let the chiefs be ordered to call together their troops. Let us collect our armies. By all means let an ambassador be sent to demand from Duryodhana justice to his cousins. If he is willing to do it, so well

and good. If not, let us declare war. Meanwhile let us get ready.'

'Well said!' replied Krishna, 'you have spoken wisely. We are all agreed that the first thing is to send a messenger to Hastinapura to learn what Duryodhana proposes to do. If war can be avoided, it will be wise. If Duryodhana will act fairly, the quarrel can perhaps be settled. If he refuses to listen to reason, then summon us and with our armies we will conquer and kill Duryodhana.'

Then the royal guests went back each to his kingdom and Yudhishtira and Virata began to prepare for war, summoning the subject kings to arms. The news of these preparations reached Hastinapura, and at

once Duryodhana collected armies and called on the Kuru chiefs to assemble their followers. The Pandava camp was fixed at Upaplayya and there all was bustle and excitement and troops arming and drilling. Yuyudhana, chief of the Satwatas, brought an army of horse and foot and many elephants and cars. Dhrishtaketu, chief of the Chedis, Ayatsena, Raja of Magadha and the chief of the Pandyas hastened to the meeting place with powerful armies. Virata, Raja of the Matsyas, brought an *akshauhini* of troops, and further reinforced by the soldiers and cars of Drupada the Pandava army was a splendid array. In Hastinapura the same feverish preparations were afoot. To the standard of the Kauravas rallied Bhagadatta. Bhurisrava and Salya each brought an *akshauhini* of men. Kritivarman with the Bhojas, the Andhas and the Kukras brought an *akshauhini*. Jayadratha led an army from Sindhusauvira. Sudakshina, Raja of the Kambojas, with the Yavanas and Sakas brought an army. Raja Nila came from his city of Mahishmati,

with the troops from the southern country. The two Rajas of Avanti brought each an *akshauhini*. The five princes of Kekaya hastened to join Duryodhana, and other chiefs contributed troops amounting to three divisions. Thus Duryodhana had an army of eleven *akshauhinis* and Yudhishtira one of seven. While the land was filling with armed men, Raja Drupada sent his priest to Hastinapura, instructing him to speak firmly but without threats to the king. He was to dwell on the hardships endured by the Pandavas and the good faith they had kept. Finally he was to ask for the restoration of the kingdom and to declare that all that the sons of Pandu wanted were their rights.

After the council at the court of Virata Krishna had returned to Dwaraka. Now spies at Virata's court

carried to Duryodhana news of the council and that Krishna had advised the sons of Pandu to fight for their rights if the kingdom was not given to them. So he determined to go to

Dwaraka to win Krishna over to his side. At the same time Arjuna decided to follow Krishna to Dwaraka to ask for his help in the coming battle. And it happened that both the princes reached the palace almost at the same time when Krishna was asleep. Duryodhana arrived a little earlier than Arjuna. Admitted to his room, Duryodhana sat down on a chair at the head of the bed, but Arjuna stood at the end of the bed. Thus they waited till Krishna woke, when he first saw Arjuna. Then, seeing Duryodhana, he asked them both what they wanted and why they had come. 'We are both here', replied Duryodhana, 'to ask for your help in the coming battle. It is the custom for him who is asked for assistance to promise

Arjuna and  
Duryodhana both  
appeal for help to  
Krishna.

it to him who comes first. I arrived first and therefore I can claim your help.'

'You came first; that I do not doubt' said Krishna, 'but I saw Arjuna first. As you came first and I saw him first, I must help you both. It is customary to let the younger applicant have the first choice; therefore Arjuna is entitled to choose. I have the army of the Narayanas, many thousands of fine troops, and then there is myself. You can choose the soldiers or me who will go to the battle but will go unarmed and will not fight. Choose, Arjuna, which you care to have.'

Then Arjuna at once said: 'I choose you'. So Duryodhana got the soldiers. He was very pleased and considered that the Pandavas were already beaten. When he had gone, Krishna asked Arjuna why he had chosen him. 'Even if you will not fight,' Arjuna replied, 'I desire to have you with me, for there is no one mightier than you and to have you near me will be such encouragement and help that I know that I shall conquer. Promise that you will be my charioteer.' And Krishna promised.

When Drupada's priest arrived at Hastinapura, he was admitted at once to an audience with the Maharaja.

Drupada's priest arrives at Hastinapura. Around Dhritarashtra were gathered all his counsellors and his sons. In quiet tones the ambassador stated the case for the Pandavas. He said that there could be no question as to their claims at least to a share in the kingdom and that the attempts to kill them and their final defeat by dishonest means at dice and the gross insults offered to them and their wife justified instant war. 'Yet I am to say that, forgiving all these wrongs, they are desirous of a peaceful settlement with the Kauravas. If they can avoid a war

which will bring ruin on many lands, they wish to avoid it. But they must have what is theirs. If they send a message of peace, it is not because they are not ready to fight for their rights. It is true that the Kuru army is large, that it musters now as much as eleven *akshauhinis*, while that of Yudhishtira only totals seven. But the Pandavas are very strong ; Arjuna is equal alone to many thousands of men.'

'There is no one here' replied Bhishma, 'who will dispute the facts stated. The wrongs of the sons of Pandu are great and they are entitled to have their father's property. If they wish to fight, is it likely that they will be defeated?' At this point Karna leapt to his feet. 'The story that you, Brahman, have told us is an old one. What is the good of repeating it? Sakuni, playing for Duryodhana, beat Yudhishtira at dice. The sons of Pandu were banished to the forest. Let them abide by their agreement. If you come here to threaten Duryodhana, go back and tell your master that he will not give up a foot of land from fear. If justice demands it, he will give the whole kingdom to an enemy. If they wish to get back their kingdom, they must live the proper time in the woods. If, however, they choose to act in a dishonourable way and they force us to fight, they will be sorry when they face the Kaurava army.'

'What good is it for you to boast thus?' asked Bhishma angrily. 'You would be no match for Arjuna. If we do not accept the offer of peace brought by this priest, we shall all die.'

Dhritarashtra here spoke, reproving Karna and saying that Bhishma had spoken wisely. A peaceful settlement, he said, was in the interests of the whole family. The matter, however, needed consideration



and, after consultation, he would send a messenger to Yudhishthira. So the Brahman was sent back to Virata's court.

When he was alone, Dhritarashtra summoned Sanjaya. He told him that he feared the battle greatly, that the Pandavas were invincible and that with Krishna, Drupada and their other allies they would destroy the Kaurava army. He ordered Sanjaya to go and talk to Yudhishthira, taking friendly messages to him and trying to soothe him.

Sanjaya is sent  
to Yudhishthira.

So Sanjaya started out for the Matsya country and was received in a friendly way by Yudhishthira in the midst of his armies at Upaplaya. Having given the Maharaja's greetings, Sanjaya said that Dhritarashtra desired peace. In reply Yudhishthira said that no one could wish for peace more than he; but, unless his rights were recognized and satisfied, there could be no peace. 'If there are dissensions in our family, is it not because Dhritarashtra followed the advice of his wicked son? He would not listen to the wise words of Vidura, but only thought how he could gratify his son who is covetous and mean, envious, foul-tongued, cruel and vicious. When we suffered grievous insults at the game of dice, Dhritarashtra never interfered to defend us, nor did he praise Vidura for rebuking Duryodhana. We have been robbed of our inheritance. Dhritarashtra and his sons wish for everything; they wish to rule the whole earth. What chance of peace is there? To-day the sons of Dhritarashtra are alive because they have not met Arjuna in battle, because they have not had to face Bhima's mace. We have suffered much undeserved misery. You know all the insults we have had to bear. I sent a message of goodwill and I desire to live on friendly terms with

the sons of Dhritarashtra. But first I must have my kingdom of Indraprastha restored to me.'

Then Sanjaya returned to Hastinapura. He saw the Maharaja and told him that Yudhishtira wished to have what was his. 'Fair-minded and kind-hearted, the son of Pandu wishes to do no wrong. When he related his wrongs to me, I realized that destiny is stronger than we are, or such misery could never have overtaken so good a man. Your conduct is unworthy and sinful, and if you have not yet been overwhelmed with the sorrow and trouble to which it is certain to lead, that is because a generous foe spares you. You have followed the counsels of the wicked. You have tried to please an evil-hearted son, and ruin and misery will be your fate in this world and the next. Your counsellors advise you to cheat the sons of Pandu. If you listen to them, the ruin of your family is certain. You are to blame for these quarrels which will bring death to you all. If you will not act justly and gain peace by honestly restoring their kingdom to the Pandavas, then Arjuna will destroy the Kurus as fire consumes a heap of dry grass. You thought yourself happy because your wicked son had won at the game of dice. You are now to reap the harvest of your dishonest weakness. I am weary now and ask your permission to go to bed. To-morrow in the council hall I will deliver the message of the Pandavas.'

When the morning came, there assembled in the great council hall of white marble, its carved roof supported by golden pillars, the chiefs and princes and counsellors of the Kurus, taking their seats in the chairs of gilded wood. Then Dhritarashtra was led in and took his seat on the throne and Sanjaya, being commanded to speak, said :

Sanjaya delivers  
the message of the  
Pandavas.

‘Maharaja, the sons of Pandu, speaking through the lips of Arjuna, send you this message. Tell the Maharaja, this’ said the mighty bowman, ‘in the presence of all the Kurus and in the presence of that Suta’s son Karna, that foul-tongued and wicked fool who is so anxious to fight with me, and also in the presence of all those kings who are in alliance with the Kurus and let my words be heard clearly by all. If Dhritarashtra’s son will not give back to Yudhishtira his kingdom, then it is certain that the *karma* of the sons of Dhritarashtra must be evil and as yet unsatisfied and that they are doomed to fulfil it on a bloody battlefield fighting the Pandavas. If Duryodhana wants war, he *can* have it. The woes and wrongs of Yudhishtira shall be paid for in blood. As he lay on a bed of woe in the woods, so shall Duryodhana lie on a bed of woe in battle yielding up his life. Righteous and of humble mind Yudhishtira bore meekly and nobly the wrongs done him, and he is ready now to forgive those who have oppressed him if his kingdom is restored to him. Let Duryodhana beware lest he provoke us too far. If it is to be war, he will live to repent of his folly. When he sees the heads of his soldiers struck off with broad-headed arrows as birds pick off fruit from the tree top; when he sees his men falling from the cars elephants and horses rolling in their blood; when he sees his brothers dying around him, then he will be sorry he provoked us. When he sees his army in retreat and the plain foul with the mangled bodies, bones and skulls of the dead, then he will repent of his folly. Armed with Gandiva, I will utterly destroy the Kauravas. As surely as the theft of our kingdom was a sin, so surely will the Kauravas be destroyed if they attempt to fight us. If they will give back our kingdom, they may live; but in a battle

they will die. Killing all the sons of Dhritarashtra, we will seize the whole kingdom. Tell the Kurus this, O Sanjaya !'

When Sanjaya sat down, Bhishma rose. 'Let it be peace,' he said. 'You, Duryodhana, do not know how

A Council is held  
and speeches are  
made.

useless it is for you to defy the sons of Pandu. In Krishna they have the help of the gods ; in Arjuna, they have a warrior equal to all other mortal fighters together. When you see Krishna with conch and discus and mace in hand and that mighty bowman Arjuna on their car driving down upon you, then you will remember my words. Deaf to wisdom, you will lead your family to destruction, for you listen only to the advice of three evil counsellors, Karna the Suta's son, your uncle the rogue Sakuni and your arrogant brother Dussasana.'

'What right have you,' retorted Karna, 'to abuse me thus ? Is it my sin that I was not born a Kshatriya ? At least I have been true to all the rules of the caste. I have never wronged Duryodhana. I am ready to help him and will kill all the Pandavas.'

'Idle boasts are these,' said Bhishma. 'You kill all the Pandavas ! Why, you are not equal even to one of them. Rajas and counsellors, the woes that are going to befall the sons of Dhritarashtra are due to this Suta. Trusting to him, that fool Duryodhana insulted those godlike heroes his cousins. What chance has this boaster in battle with them ? In Matsya were not he and all the Kurus routed by Arjuna ? When Duryodhana had been captured by the Gandharvas in the forest, where was this loud-voiced braggart then ? When his brother was killed in Virata's capital, what did he do to avenge him ?'

'The advice of Bhishma, Maharaja, is wise,' said Drona. 'Those who are covetous are bad advisers. Do not let matters go too far. All the threats of Arjuna will be fulfilled, for there is no bowman equal to him. Make peace with the sons of Pandu.'

Without noticing the advice of Drona and Bhishma, Dhritarashtra asked Sanjaya what preparations Yudhishtira was making for war and who would go into battle with him. When it was seen that the king paid no heed to the Kuru elders, all present felt that war was certain. In response to the Maharaja's question Sanjaya said: 'The Panchalas, the Kekayas and the Matsyas are preparing to fight.' At this moment Sanjaya, gazing vacantly round the council hall for a minute, suddenly fainted. It was some moments before he recovered and all around were heard murmurs, 'No doubt he has been overcome by the memory of the armies he saw and of the danger threatening the Kauravas.' Then when Sanjaya recovered he went on to give a catalogue of the mighty hosts that were arming to fight for the Pandavas.

As he listened the Maharaja groaned aloud. When Sanjaya ceased speaking, he said: 'My children are doomed, doomed. I dread the anger of Bhima as a deer dreads a tiger.'

Dhritarashtra's  
lament.

With his great steel mace like that carried by Yama, he will destroy in battle cars and elephants, men and horses. He will beat the life out of my children. Wronged by them, he will spare no one. Alas! my foolish sons have climbed for the honey but thought not of the descent. Of all the Pandavas I dread most the anger of Bhima. I know that we ought to grasp at peace. Yet I am dragged on by destiny which is ever stronger than man. Even



now, with the danger staring me in the face, I do not control my sons. If they must tread the road to Yama's region, it must be so. No better fate can a Kshatriya have than to die on the field of battle. May the gods help us! I see nothing but woe and death. The destruction of the Kurus is at hand. All this misery has arisen from the game at dice. That was due to Duryodhana's avarice. How mad he has been, yet what can I do? I am as a straw in the whirlwind of fate. Tied to the wheel of time I must fly round with it. Tell me, Sanjaya, what shall I do and how shall I do it? My sons will be destroyed, their time has come. Helpless and alone, I am fated to hear the wailing of the women for my slaughtered sons. As a fire in the winds burns dry grass, so will Bhima, mace in hand, with the help of Arjuna, destroy all my troops.'

'What is the good, Maharaja, of wailing thus?' said Sanjaya. 'Why do you not use your power as a father and king to control your children? You have not tried to do so. You talk as a wise man and act as a fool. When the Pandavas were being beaten at dice, you kept saying, 'Is the stake won?' or 'Good, it is won,' laughing like a pleased child. When brutal and rude words were said to your nephews, you did not interfere. Pleased that you and your sons would have the whole kingdom, you did not foresee the misery that you were preparing. You laughed when the Pandavas were defeated at dice. Now you wring your hands and give way to despair. The Matsyas, Panchalas, Kekayas, Salwas and Curasenas pay you no allegiance but have gone to join Yudhishtira. Are you mad that you do not control your evil-hearted son who has caused all this woe? Control him: do not wail in this helpless way.'



'There is nothing to fear. We are equal to the Pandavas' said Duryodhana. 'With such aid as the heroes Bhishma and Drona, Kripa and Karna can give us, we have nothing to fear. Our army is the larger and we have more allies than the Pandavas have. We are sovereigns of the earth and all these kings owe us allegiance and will go into battle with us. All here wonder and laugh at your fears. I am equal to Bhima with the mace. There is none on earth my equal. As for Arjuna, united we can overcome him. Think whom we have: Bhishma, Drona, Kripa, Karna, Sommadatta, Vahluka, Salya, the two Rajas of Avanti and Jayadratha. We have eleven *akshauhinis*, Yudhishtira has only seven. Both the Pandavas and we are of the same race. Why then should we be frightened of them? I am strong enough to face the Pandavas in battle.'

'My son, you speak as a madman,' said Dhritarashtra. 'You could not defeat Yudhishtira even. I ask you, Duryodhana, cease this hostility. Half the kingdom is enough for us. Give back to the sons of Pandu their legal share. All here consider this to be just and proper. None of us desire war. Have done with you folly.'

'I cannot yield' replied Duryodhana. 'I challenge the Pandavas to battle. I do not ask you, or Bhishma, Drona, Aswatthaman, Kripa or any one to help. Alone with Karna I will make the sacrifice of battle with Yudhishtira as victim. My car shall be my altar, my sword the smaller ladle, my mace the larger for pouring libations. My coat of mail will be the assembly of spectators. My four horses will be the officiating priests. My arrows the blades of kusa grass and fame the clarified butter. Performing this

sacrifice in honour of Yama, we will return victorious. Three of us, Karna, Dussasana and I will kill the Pandavas in battle. Either I will kill them and rule the earth or, having killed me, they shall reign supreme. I can sacrifice my life, kingdom, wealth, everything; but I cannot live at peace with the Pandavas. To them I will not yield as much land as may be covered by the sharp point of a needle.

'I have done with you, Duryodhana. You are a lost man,' said Dhritarashtra. 'For you, princes and chiefs, I am sorry, for you go to your deaths if you follow my foolish son. As tigers among a herd of deer, the Pandavas will strike you down. Complete destruction is about to overtake the army of the Kurus. Let us have peace. I am for peace. My son, listen to me. The Pandavas are, in my opinion, stronger than the Kauravas.'

Once more Duryodhana spoke boastfully, saying he had no fear of the Pandavas. Mournfully the old Maharaja appealed again to him. 'Duryodhana, my dear son' he said, 'you are as a traveller not knowing the road, thinking the wrong road the right one. Even if you sacrifice your life, you cannot conquer Yudhishtira. Bhima has not his equal among men and deals blows with his mace as deadly as those of Yama himself. Can you dare to defy Arjuna armed with the bow Gandiva? Then fighting for them there will be Dhristadyumna, prince of Panchala, and Satyaki, the hero of the Vrishni race. Greatest of all is Krishna. Heed the advice of your elders and those who wish us well. Think how you all fled before Arjuna when you had seized the cattle in the Matsya country. If Arjuna alone could do that, what chance have you now? The Pandavas are your kinsmen. Be friendly with them and give them half the kingdom.'

Duryodhana gave no sign of yielding, and after a few minutes the Rajas and chiefs rose and left the hall. Then in great anxiety Dhritarashtra asked Sanjaya : 'Tell me, for you know the strength of both sides. Who will win in the battle?' At that time only his sons and kinsmen were standing round the Maharaja. In his anxiety he sent word to Queen Gandhari begging her to come to the council hall to try to persuade Duryodhana to be reasonable. When the Maharani entered, Sanjaya said : 'You ask me which side will win. Krishna will fight for the Pandavas. What chance is there then for the Kauravas? Greatest of men, Krishna is god as well as man. At his will the strongest army must be defeated. None can resist him. Victory will be for that side on which Krishna fights. In his hands are the fates of men. He is ruler of the earth and heaven. I believe that, making the Pandavas his instruments, he intends to slay your sons who are all sinful. Lord of time, death and the whole universe, he works for the good of mankind. He it is from whom all spring and to whom all return.'

When Dhritarashtra heard these words, he made one last appeal to Duryodhana. 'Listen to Sanjaya', he said. 'Do not oppose yourself to Krishna.'

'If, with the help of Arjuna, Krishna were able to slay all mankind,' retorted Duryodhana, 'I would not yield.'

'Our son, Gandhari,' said the Maharaja, 'is mad. He is determined to ruin us all. Arrogant and covetous, he will listen to no one.'

'Wretched child,' cried the queen. 'Have you no respect for your parents? Without a thought for your father or me, you are resolved, through covetousness, to throw away your kingdom and your life. Your

enemies will rejoice and I must weep at your folly. You will remember our warning words when, wounded by Bhima, you lie alone in your death agony.'

So the council broke up and war was resolved on. When the news reached the Pandavas, they consulted as to who should act as commander-in-chief of the army. After Virata, Drupada and others had been proposed, by the advice of Krishna it was decided to appoint Dhrishtadyumna.

The armies prepare for battle and march to the field.

Then the army was marshalled and the whole country-side was filled with the sound of battle. Nothing was heard but the clash of spears, the clatter of car wheels, the blast of trumpets and battle conches, and the beat of drums. Infantry and cavalry in coats of mail; war elephants in armour carrying heavy-plated howdahs large enough for seven fighting men; cars of bronze, silver and gold, went forth to battle, mile on mile of them. In the van went Bhima and the twins and the sons of Draupadi, and the commander-in-chief. Behind them came the Panchalas and Prabhadrakas. Then came Yudhishtira and behind his chariot followed the transport column, wagon-loads of grain and fodder, tents, carts and draught cattle, engineers and mechanics, hospital carts and surgeons, and then a crowd of camp followers. Around Yudhishtira were grouped the cars of the Raja of Kasi, of Crenimat and Vasudana and the invincible Cikhandi, Virata, Kuntibhoja and Dhrishtadyumna's sons. Around Krishna and Arjuna were Anadhrishti, Chekitana, Dhrishtaketu, chief of the Chedis, and Satyaki, the Vrishni prince. Thus the Pandava army marched to the plain of Kurukshetra. There Yudhishtira ordered the troops to pitch their camp where there were trees and water and plenty of

rich grass. Round the camp deep ditches were dug and tents were set up and roads laid. In the centre of the camp stores in great quantities, food and fodder, bows and bowstrings, spare car wheels and wood to repair the floors of chariots, spare coats of mail, lances, battle-axes, and swords in vast numbers were heaped up in large tents.

When he heard that Yudhishtira had marched and was encamped at Kurukshetra, Duryodhana gave

The equipment  
of the Kaurava  
army.

orders for marshalling his array. Karna, Dussasana and Sakuni superintended the collection of arms and provisions. Then Duryodhana gave orders as to the proper distribution of his army. There were three classes of soldiers. In the first rank were seasoned troops of experience, first class fighting men. The second line was to be held by the younger soldiers who were healthy and strong but had not had much experience of war; while in the third line were the veterans and men over the fighting age. Never had a better equipped army taken the field. Each car of the many thousands arrayed for battle had extra timber to repair the flooring and nuts and bolts, screws and spare parts for making good the damage suffered in the fight. Each charioteer had extra tiger skins and tough leather aprons to protect him when those in use were cut away. In each car were stored spare javelins, quivers of arrows, long-handled spears of iron, heavy clubs of wood and of iron, banners, flagstaves and many noosed ropes and lassoes to catch the horses of the opposing cars. There were vast stores of armour of all kinds, spare cuirasses, helmets and greaves and thumb protectors for the bowmen. Many transport wagons were loaded with jars of oil, resin, sand, powdered lac and other inflammable material with cauldrons

for their heating and long syringes with which they could be squirted on the enemy. There were catapults for stone throwing and planks of bamboo to form shields to protect them from the enemy's syringes. There were earthen jars filled with poisonous snakes to be let loose among the enemy. There were cart loads of every kind of spiked club, battle-axes, spiked gauntlets, lances like pitchforks, poisoned javelins and darts.

As they took their places in the battle array, Duryodhana's divisions made a splendid show, the leaders in gold and silver armour; the spear-men glittering in burnished steel; the vari-coloured flags of the cars; the chariot horses with bejewelled head-pieces and bridles with tinkling bells on their arching necks; the elephants in steel armour with spikes on their head pieces. Each car was drawn by four horses and had three drivers, one for the two front horses and one on each side of him to control the animals near the wheels. Each elephant carried seven soldiers, namely, two bowmen, two men armed with hooks, two with swords and one with a lance and trident. On each elephant were carried supplies of arrows and spare weapons. The cavalry were mounted on horses wearing mail, the men being all in armour. The infantry, numbering many thousands, wore armour and were armed with spears, swords and bows. Each car went into battle guarded by ten elephants, ten horsemen and ten foot soldiers. Moreover there were considerable reserves of every rank. To each reserve car were allotted fifty elephants with their complements of men, one hundred horse soldiers and seven foot soldiers for each horse. The eleven *akshauhinis* were put under the command of Kripa, Drona, Salya, Jayadratha, Raja of the Sindhus, Sudakshina, chief of the Kambojas,



Kirtavarman, Drona's son Aswatthaman, Karna, Bhurisrava, Sakuni and Valhika. Bhishma was named as supreme commander of the army. The troops marched out from Hastinapura and took up their camp on the plain of Kurukshetra. Thus the two hosts faced each other and were ready for battle. In the evening before the battle Duryodhana in his madness sent a herald to the Pandava camp with insulting messages. Furious beyond words at the insults, the Pandavas and Krishna sent back challenges and both sides gave orders to the troops to be up and armed before sunrise.

When dawn came the two armies were drawn up ready to attack. With blasts of conch and trumpet and beat of drum the troops deployed on

The battle.  
Arjuna's grief  
when he sees his  
kinsmen arrayed  
against him.

the plain, cavalry and infantry, chariots and elephants, all in their stations. At the head of the Kaurava host was Bhishma, wearing silver armour over his white robes. With the white umbrella held over his white turban, the old chief sat in his silver car from which fluttered a white standard adorned with five stars. All around him were grouped the leaders of the army corps, each in glittering armour mounted on his car. Behind stretched endless ranks of soldiers, the rising sun glinting on the forest of spears. In the front of the Pandava army was Dhrishtadyumna with Yudhishtira. Around them were grouped the kings and chiefs each commanding divisions which were drawn up in serried ranks across the plain behind the leaders. At the right hand of Yudhishtira was the car of Arjuna driven by Krishna. As the sun rose and Arjuna saw the full ranks of the army opposing them, he asked Krishna to drive some way forward that he might see more clearly

those who were arrayed against them. Quickly Krishna drove forward between the opposing armies and Arjuna saw in his foes and his friends his kindred. There they stood facing each other in their cars awaiting the onslaught, ancestors and teachers, grandfathers, uncles, cousins and brothers, fathers-in-law, nephews, sons, friends and allies. When he saw those many familiar faces, some of them dear and revered by him since childhood, a great wave of pity swept over him. He grieved at the terrible slaughter that was to come. 'Krishna, when I see all my kinsmen arrayed against one another, my heart fails me. My limbs tremble. My grip on the bow Gandiva relaxes and I do not wish to fight. What is victory, what is sovereignty, what is life even worth to me, if our success is to mean woe and death for all these kinsmen, grandsires, teachers, sons, uncles, cousins, fathers-in-law, brothers-in-law? Even for the sovereignty of the three worlds I would not kill my kinsmen, much less for an earthly kingdom. What pleasure will it be to us if we do succeed in killing the sons of Dhritarashtra? However truly they may be called our bitter foes, will it not be sin to slay them? It cannot be right to kill one's kinsmen. Even if they do not think it sinful and wish to kill us, ought we not to refrain from this family slaughter in which our whole race will perhaps perish? To me it seems a great sin that we have come here to kill our kin just to win an earthly throne. Better for us if, unresisting and unarmed, we allow ourselves to be killed by them if they are wicked enough to wish to kill us.' Having spoken so, Arjuna laid aside Gandiva and sat down in the car, much troubled.

‘Why are you sorrowful, Arjuna?’ asked Krishna. ‘It is not right that on the eve of battle a brave man, a Kshatriya, should speak thus. Shame on you for your weakness of heart! Be brave and slay.’ ‘Look there!’ replied Arjuna. ‘See Bhishma and Drona, my ancestor and my teacher.

The Bhagavat Gita. Krishna explains the illusion of death.

How can I seek to slay those who should be revered by me? It would be better to be a beggar in the street than to raise one’s hand in anger against them. Even if one’s *gurus* were evil and avaricious, what pleasure can it be to kill them? If we kill those who are ranged before us here, we shall not want to live. I have forgotten my anger in my pity. Tell me what is right. You are my guide, I am your disciple. Tell me what I am to do. I feel that, even if I were to win the greatest kingdom on earth and reign without a rival, I should go mad with grief when I thought of this slaughter. Krishna, I cannot fight. I cannot kill them.’

‘You mourn’ replied Krishna, ‘for those who are not to be pitied. You speak the thoughts of the ignorant and foolish. The truly wise mourn neither for the living nor the dead. You and these kinsmen before you were never born and will never cease to be. As surely as this body of yours must pass through infancy, youth, manhood and old age, so surely will you acquire another body. The wise man realizes that bodily sensations, the pleasures and pains of earthly life, are not permanent. Your grief at the coming slaughter is foolish. Dismiss it. He is truly great who has learned this and in pleasure or pain is alike unmoved. The things of the body are illusions, only the things of the spirit really exist. The spirit is eternal. It cannot perish or be destroyed. Only the body dies. He who says “I have killed a man” and he who says “I am

slain " are both mistaken. Neither has slain or been slain. The spirit was never born and it will never die. Birthless, deathless, changeless, the spirit lives for ever. Death does not touch it at all, though the body be dead. Just as a man casts away worn garments and puts on new ones, so the spirit casts off the worn-out body, and enters a new one. The spirit cannot be wounded with weapons nor burned with flame, nor drowned nor wasted and dried up, nor starved. Therefore there is no reason for you to mourn over those about to die. Death is the fate of all who are born ; birth is the fate of all who die. The spirit is unseen and unknown ; only between birth and death does it take a bodily form. What grief, then, is there in death ? Men may marvel at it but none can truly know the spirit. In each body it lives, but it is indestructible. Do not grieve for these kinsmen. Do not hesitate to kill, for, remember, there is no better fate for a Kshatriya than to die fighting fiercely in battle. If, forgetful of the duties of your order, you will not fight in a just cause, then you will be for ever disgraced, and for you such fate will be worse than death. It will be said that you would not fight because you were afraid, and those who praised you will despise you. Can you wish so sad a fate ? If you die, you will go to heaven. If you conquer, you will enjoy sovereignty on earth. Take up the bow, Arjuna. Have done with this weakness. Fight.'

'You must think of pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat as the same. Fight for the fight's sake. Then there is no sin. Those who act worthily because they hope for reward, those who study the Vedas because they believe that thus they will gain happiness hereafter will never attain the perfect bliss, for they

Work must be done as duty, not for reward. To work so is devotion to God.

cannot devote themselves wholly to God. The Vedas teach religion and thus the secret of profit and pleasure. Banish from your mind the ideas of pain and pleasure, loss and gain and all those motives which make men act or refrain from acting. Work not for the fruits of work but for the sake of the work itself. This calmness, this indifference is called *yoga* (devotion). To work with desire of reward is far less worthy than the selfless devotion. The wise man is undismayed by ill-fortune and unrelated by good.'

'What are the signs of the mind of such a man?' asked Arjuna.

'It is he who is free of all longing for worldly pleasures, who has neither fear nor wrath, who is neither cast down nor overjoyed. The chaste and temperate man controls his passions and appetite; but his passions and appetite remain. He who is sincerely devoted to God has no passions. He enjoys the objects of sense with senses under control. He neither likes nor dislikes. All is the same for him if it is duty. The man who has not his senses under control can have no peace of mind. He is driven hither and thither by his passions as a boat is blown by the wind. He only has peace of mind who knows how worthless are the objects of desire and has ceased to crave for them.

'If devotion and contemplation are better than work, why, Krishna, do you bid me undertake such dreadful work as the slaughter of my kinsmen?

'There are two kinds of devotion to God, through knowledge and through work. All men must work. The body cannot be supported without work. But the highest work is that done without wish for reward. Work in itself is noble and ennobles and uplifts those who do it without thought of gain or loss. I have acquired all that I can in the three worlds, yet I still

work. For, if I did not, then men would follow my example and the earth-life would end. This struggle is your work. Fight hard, bravely, but without desire, without affection or enmity. This is your duty and to do one's duty, even imperfectly is better than to leave it undone. Death in performance of your duty is preferable to an undutiful life.'

Desire the cause  
of sin. The con-  
quest of it.

'What is it' asked Arjuna, 'that makes a man sin often against his will, as if he were compelled by force?'

'Passion and anger' replied Krishna, 'desire in all its forms, that is what compels men to sin. Desire is like a fire hungry to choke and destroy the true knowledge of God. With the senses as its instrument desire deceives the spirit, and makes knowledge vague. It fills man's mind with doubts. The man who controls his senses can defy desire and is free. The senses are more potent than the flesh, but the mind is more potent than the senses. Greatest of all is the spirit. Therefore kill the foes who are desire materialized. This system of devotion I taught to Vivaswat and he declared it to Manu.'

'How is this?' asked Arjuna. 'Your birth was later than Vivaswat's.'

'Many times have I been born. Though I am the lord of all creatures, knowing no decay, yet I take birth when the world needs me, when it is full of sin. To protect good men, to punish evil-doers, to maintain justice and right, I am born again and again, age after age. He that knows me truly has freed himself from desire. Casting off his body, he is not bound again upon the wheel of life. The forms of my worship are many. He who sincerely follows me knows me, whatever be his creed. All are welcomed by me. Actions



whether good or bad do not win me. It is the spirit in which the action is done that matters. Even those who sought to free themselves from desire had to work before they were freed. Therefore do you work.'

'You say, Krishna, that to work is good and not to work is good. Tell me then which is better,' said Arjuna.

'It is good to work for God's sake and it is good to abandon the life of the world for God's sake and to spend one's days in contemplation freed from all desire. But the first is the better life. The man who lives a life of action devoted to God, having conquered his desires and living the life of sense not for himself but as a part of the universe and as a sacrifice to Brahma, seeking no reward for any action, that man attains to the highest happiness. The man who has Brahma as his goal, who realizes that every one lives and dies for Him, that He is everybody and in everything, looks with equal favour on a Brahman, a cow, an elephant, a dog and a Chandala. To him all creatures are equal, for they are all Brahma. He who understands that the objects of sense are worthless and that they are but a part of a life that must be lived for Him and that each sense is to be used for His sake, he attains real happiness. He who while alive is undisturbed either by joy or grief has reached true happiness. He who finds his happiness within himself by reason of his unity with Brahma, he is happy. He only who has conquered himself finds joy in himself as a manifestation of Brahma. Such a man when dead becomes absorbed in Brahma, the Supreme Spirit. The man who starves himself is no worthier than the man who overeats; there is no greater merit in never sleeping than in sleeping too much. He is the true worshipper

of Brahma who is temperate in food and pleasures, who in all he does works temperately, is temperate in his sleep and his vigils. The true worshipper is he whose senses are under control and who has united himself with Him. As a lamp sheltered from the wind does not flicker, so such a man is not influenced by desire. He who has conquered his desires and has become one with Brahma, is the happiest man. He sees Brahma in himself and all creatures; therefore he sees himself in all creatures and all creatures in himself. He that sees me, that is, Brahma in all and all in me, he is always one with me and I with him. He that worships me as being in all and knows that the all is one whatever he be, Brahman or sweeper, rich or poor, he lives in me.'

'This calmness of mind, this life unmoved by joy or sorrow, this is hard to attain. The mind is restless, the thoughts are driven hither and thither by emotions. It seems to me that to control the mind is as hard as to restrain the wind,' said

The progress of  
the soul life after  
life.

Arjuna.

'The mind' replied Krishna, 'is truly hard to conquer. It is restless and fickle. But when the desires are under control, then the mind can be governed.'

'Tell me, Krishna, what is the fate of him who from the restlessness of his mind fails to win unity with Brahma either by a life of action or inaction? Is he allowed another chance or is he without hope?'

'Neither in this world nor in heaven is he without hope. No man who has tried to live aright, who has done good acts is without hope. For him there always are further chances. On death he goes to

the heaven set apart for those who have done good deeds. There he lives until the merit of his acts is exhausted. Then he is reborn perhaps in the home of those who are good and wealthy or becomes the son of some man devoted to God. In such surroundings he is brought once more into contact with the truth, that Brahma is all and all is He. From that stage of knowledge he must struggle again to attain true unity with Brahma. Even if the flesh is weak and desires seem to master him, he will struggle upward because of the impulse that the efforts of the last life have created in him. The merits of a life of devotion to God are greater than those of him who obeys strictly the ceremonial rules of the Vedas. After many rebirths the devoted servant of Brahma, pure of all sins, attains perfection and reaches the supreme goal. Such a man is greater than he who starves himself, greater than the learned. He who knows me and is one with me is greater than these'

' I Brahma am earth, water, fire, the air, the infinite universe, the mind, the intelligence and consciousness.

God immanent in all things. These are the eight divisions of my lower nature. Higher than that is my other nature, that which is the living principle in all. From me comes all life. From me all begins and in me all ends. None is higher than I. On me all depend as pearls hang on a string. I am the salt of the ocean; I am the light of the sun and moon. I am the Om in all the Vedas. I am sound. I am the strength of man. I am the scents of the earth and of its fruits; I am the golden red glow of the flame. I am the life in all creatures. I am the exhaustion and devout weakness of the *rishi* and I am the muscles of the warrior and the fierceness of the

tiger. I am the intelligence of all intelligent beings, the glory of all that is glorious. I am the strength of all that are strong and I am the desire of all that desire according to nature temperately. With their minds obscured by the clouds of desire men do not know me. I know all that has been and all that will be and all that is. But none knoweth me. At the moment of birth all men are deluded by the witchery of desire and dislike. Those only who have won escape from the delusions of desire know and worship me. The whole world is penetrated by me in my unmanifest form. All creatures are in me, but I am not in them. I create the world but I am not the world or contained in it. As the invisible atmosphere fills space, so do I fill and permeate the world. But I am apart from the world. I sit as controller. By me all things animate and inanimate are created. At my will the world passes through its rounds of birth and death. Those who have not attained to knowledge scorn me as god because I have assumed human form. But those who have gained knowledge know that I am the beginning and the end, the source of all things and am in all things. I am the Vedic sacrifice. I am the sacrifice ordered in the *smritis*. I am the *swadha*. I am the *mantra*. I am the juice of the plants used at sacrifice; I am the sacrificial libation. I am the fire of sacrifice. I am the offering. I am the father and mother of the Universe. I am the Vedas. I am heat. I am rain. I am immortality and death. I am the existent and the non-existent. I am alike to all: none is dear and none hateful to me. But they that know me truly and are one with me, they are in me and I am in them. Those that worship me are never lost. Finally they all attain eternal happiness.

With humbly joined hands Arjuna asked that he might see Krishna in his eternal form. Krishna granted him celestial sight and he saw not the friendly charioteer, but the universe in Krishna. He saw birth and death, construction and destruction, the whole process of the uni-

Arjuna asks to be allowed to see Krishna in his divine form.

versal life in all its forms. Most of all was he impressed by the sight of Krishna as fate destroying the warriors who were then drawn up facing each other at Kurukshetra. To his wondering question Krishna replied: 'I am Death the destroyer of all things as I am the Creator of all things. These men on the plain around you are fated to die. Whether you fight or not, I shall destroy them. You will be but the instrument of destiny. Therefore have done with doubt and grief. Conquer and kill your foes and gain glory and a kingdom. You are my agent. Already are these Kurus dead men, for their time has come. Fight bravely: it is your duty.'

Trembling with fear, Arjuna bowed down before God: 'O Lord, O God of gods, Thou that art indestructible, Thou that art that which is and that which is not, I worship you, I kneel before you. As my friend Krishna I have not known you. From ignorance and from affection I have treated you carelessly as one does treat a friend. I beg that you will forgive any disrespect that I have shown towards you. As a father forgives a son's and a friend a friend's, so I beg you to forgive my faults. To see you has pleased me but it has frightened me. Let me see again the human form so dear and familiar.'

Then Krishna said: 'Have no fears, Arjuna. You are dear to me. Only by you among the race of men can my true form be seen, not even by the closest

study of the Vedas, by penances, sacrifices and gifts can any man behold me. Look! I am once more Krishna the charioteer.' So speaking he took from Arjuna the celestial sight and Arjuna said: 'Beloved friend, Janardhana, I was frightened. Now that I see your human form again my mind is at ease. Tell me, of your worshippers who are dear to you.'

'Those who fix their minds on me and, uniting with me in spirit, ever adore me, those I consider most devoted, they are dear to me. The

Description of  
those who are dear  
to God.

man who hates no living creature, who is friendly and pitiful to all, who is unselfish and not vain, who is calm in both pleasure and pain, who is forgiving, contented, strong in will, with heart ever fixed on me, he is dear to me. He who causes no sorrow in the world, who is free from joy, anger, fear and worry, who is diligent at work but indifferent to the results of gain from such work, he is dear to me. He who is the same to friend and foe, in honour or dishonour, in wealth or poverty, in joy or sorrow, who cares neither for praise or blame, who is silent and contented with his lot, who is not a prisoner in the chains of family affection and is full of faith, that man is dear to me. True knowledge is not what men teach from books. The man who is simple and without vanity, who is not proud or ostentatious, who injures none, forgives all, who is honourable and honest, paying respect to elders, of pure life, self-controlled, constant and indifferent to objects of sense, who is calm in affliction or illness, who is ready to forsake those dear to him that he may devote himself to me,—this man has true knowledge. Gaining this knowledge, my worshipper becomes one with me. Matter and spirit have had no beginning. Acting and inter-acting, they make the world of sensations.



Whatever is created, animate or inanimate, has its birth in the combination of matter and spirit. He has true knowledge who sees the Supreme Lord in all, the eternal in the temporal. He has attained to Brahma. But, though the Supreme Self lives as the soul in the body, it has no share in the life and work of the body, nor is it soiled or made impure by the sins and weaknesses of the body. As space which is everywhere is never soiled or impure, so the soul in the body is never soiled or impure. As the world is lighted by the sun, so the spirit lights up the whole world of matter.'

'There are two kinds of beings born into this world, the godlike and the demoniac. He who is fearless,

The godlike and demoniac types of men.

pure of heart, self-controlled, a student of the Vedas, honest, free of malice and anger, truthful, calm, charitable to the faults of others, forgiving, constant and without vanity, that man is godlike. The demoniac men have none of these qualities. They are full of malice and covetousness. In them there is no truth or purity. They say that none exists, that there is no god, and that the world and all the living creatures in it have been created through the chance confusion of matter. These men are born for the world's destruction. They are scourges sent by me. Consumed by limitless desires, arrogant and confident in their own strength and ability, they are as blind men staggering around the earth and they work sin and disaster. Their ambition for power and pleasure has no limit. They consider that the highest end and aim of life is the gratification of desires, that that is the only purpose of life. Lured on by the illusive light of hope, slaves to greed and anger, they long for wealth and power to gratify all their desires. They

are for ever boasting of their successes. "To-day I have had my way: to-morrow I will have my way," they say. "To-day I have made so much money: to-morrow I will make so much more." "I have killed my enemy so and so: to-morrow I will kill so and so." "I am the lord and master. I am rich and powerful: all must obey me. I am of noble blood, there is no one nobler than I am. All must obey me: all must work for me, so that I can have every desire gratified." Thus they talk, these men blind from birth with the delusions of the senses. Vain, cruel, arrogant, sensual and selfish, they are doomed to hell. Such black-hearted monsters of pride and selfishness hate me all their lives. Again and again I send them back to be born as demoniacs. Blinded by desire during life after life, they become at last completely degraded. Three roads lead to hell, lust, anger, and avarice. Only he who conquers these can hope to climb to the highest goal.

He who works should do so without desire; only such work is worship of me. The man who abandons a task that he ought to do acts wrongly. If he abandons the task from fear of mental or bodily pain, he acts through delusion sinfully.

What are good actions and what is their reward.

He can never have the reward (freedom from pain, etc.) which he hoped to gain by not doing the task. He who faces each duty and does each well and manfully but without hope of pleasure or gain from its performance, that man is doing right. Free of doubts and knowing good and evil, the good man is not attracted by pleasant actions or repelled by unpleasant. He does his work, abandoning all wish for advantage and doing it simply because he knows that it is his duty. While in the flesh no one can abandon

all actions, for life is action. But he who never wishes for reward or gain but performs actions because they are duties, makes a renunciation pleasing to me. Evil action, good action and those actions which are done half from good and half from evil motives, each have their material reward. For him who renounces all desire for the rewards of action there is no material gain : for him there is a higher one.'

'Every action is caused and carried out by five agents or causes. First, there is the body. Next, there is the person inhabiting the body who seems to act of his own free will but does not. Thirdly, there are the organs of the body, the muscles and limbs, tongue and so on, which do or speak something, the action. Fourthly, there are the actions of those organs, the movements of the arm to strike, of the tongue to speak. Fifthly, there are the gods who govern the several actions of men. Each action of the limb, each word, each thought, is caused by these five causes. Therefore the man who believes that he is acting of his own free will deceives himself. The man who is not deluded by the senses and has no wish to gain by his action knows that, if he kills all these people, he does not really kill them and that he is not responsible for his action. In each deed there must be instrument, doer or agent, and action. Yet all these are part of Me the Supreme Self. He has true knowledge who knows that all is in Me, that all is a part of Me. He who thinks that men and things are independent and separate is in error. The duty done without attachment, without wish for gain and without dislike of the duty by a man who does not desire any reward for his action, that is the highest type of act. No human action can be perfect ; but he has

reached the highest standard of right conduct who acts because it is his duty to act as part of the Universal Self.'

'The selfish action, the action done for gain, for the gratification of the senses never can bring a man happiness.

Three kinds of happiness. There are three kinds of happiness. The highest is that of the

knowledge of duty rightly done, that happiness which is the result of self-control and self-sacrifice. This is hard and bitter at first, but at last having brought a man calmness of mind and freedom from all worldly cares it gives him a sense of happiness inexpressibly sweet and comforting. The second kind is that of the senses used temperately but still used with eager desire for pleasure. This is like nectar at first but it is a honey that turns at last to poison. Thirdly there is the happiness of those blind and deluded men who in their arrogance think that they can make their will the law of the earth. That is happiness that plunges the foolish ignorant pursuer into hell. All men chase one of these three kinds of happiness; every one must have the qualities that incline men to pursuit. Each man has his destiny. Each man has his chance, his duties done or undone. The four castes have their duties. The Brahman must be calm, self-controlled, leading a life of austerity and penance, pure in heart, forgiving and honest in nature, steadfast in his faith. These are the characteristics of the true Brahman. The Kshatriya must be brave, eager to fight, strong of limb and of will, generous to the conquered and to the poor, a true ruler of men. The Vaisyas are farmers and traders and carry out the duties of those kinds of people. Finally, the Sudras are intended for slavery: their duty is to serve the other castes. Each man who performs faithfully his

own duties can hope to gain perfection. It is better to do one's own duty badly than to do another's duty well. To do one's duty can never be a sin. Even if it seems to be sinful, it must be done, for no human actions can ever be entirely free of sin. He whose mind is under control, who is not swayed by desire and selfishness, who acts because it is his duty attains to union with Brahma. Free of all desires, such a man grieves not and does not rejoice; he has understood Me and become part of Me. Do you, Arjuna, put aside all doubts. Fix your mind on Me. Let all your actions be for Me, do them as sacrifices to Me, as worship of Me. In this way will you come to the truth. But if you believe yourself to be alone; if, relying on your mind, you think to act independently, then you will sin and will reap the reward of sin. If in self-reliance you say: "I will not fight", you act foolishly and uselessly. It is in vain that you so decide, for you will be made to fight. That which because of your mortal ignorance you do not wish to do, that you will be compelled against your will to do by the sense of duty that is in you. The Lord lives in the hearts of all: by Him all are guided and controlled. Turn to Him in your doubts, Arjuna. He will not fail you. Through Him you will gain the peace that passes all understanding.

'I have given you', said Krishna, 'the secret of knowledge beyond the grasp of men's minds. Knowing the truth, fight or not as you think right. You are very dear to me. Therefore I tell you what is for your good. Fix your heart and thoughts on Me. Work for Me, worship Me. Thus you will come to Me, free of all sin. Grieve no more, doubt no more.'

Arjuna declares  
that he will fight.  
Yudhishtira's  
noble action.

'Lord! I have faith and see clearly', replied Arjuna. 'My doubts are ended. I am now resolved. I will obey you and fight.'

Once more Arjuna took up Gandiva and his arrows. When the Pandava armies saw this, they raised a great cry of triumph. Then just as the battle was about to begin Yudhishtira, taking off his armour and laying aside his weapons, descended from his car. Slowly with his hands joined as in worship he began to walk towards the car of Bhishma. This action seemed so strange to Arjuna and his brothers that they leapt from their cars to restrain him, asking him why he thus went on foot towards the foe. Angry cries arose also from the allied kings and princes who had marshalled their troops on the Pandava side. But, without answering, Yudhishtira, followed by his amazed brothers, went steadily onward till he stood in front of Bhishma. Alone of that vast host Krishna understood that, true to the noblest traditions, finding himself compelled to fight with his elders and his teachers, the prince wished first to ask their pardon before the battle began. Yudhishtira's action was misunderstood in the Kuru army also, and there were cries of 'Coward' 'For shame'. But reaching Bhishma's car, Yudhishtira stood a moment with joined hands, then touching his grandfather's feet he said: 'I salute you. With you I must fight; but first I ask your blessing and permission.'

'Yudhishtira,' Bhishma replied, 'if you had not come to me thus, I would have cursed you. Fight, my son. May you be victorious if that be the will of the gods. I must and shall fight for your foes.' Then in turn Yudhishtira went to the cars of Drona, Kripa, Salya, followed by his brothers. When to each elder they had paid their respects, they returned to their army and remounted their cars, putting on their



armour once more. When it was seen that the motive of the son of Pandu was so noble, a shout of applause burst out from both armies, even the Kauravas approving the dutiful conduct of Yudhishtira and his brothers.

At the signal of drums and trumpets and the blasts blown on conchs the two armies advanced. Dashing across the dusty plain the leaders

The battle  
begins.

were soon engaged with one another ; while line after line of the troops of each side came into action. The fight soon became general. The confusion was great : the uproar deafening. Round the car of each chief circled the wildest struggles. Soldiers and rajas fought side by side. Cavalry soldiers unhorsed seized and rode elephants that had lost their riders. Those whose car horses had been killed fought on foot or jumped on riderless horses. The fight was fierce, no quarter was shown ; kinsmen fought together as hard as strangers. Cars charging cars smashed them to splinters. Others cars with wheels interlocked were the centres of wild hand-to-hand fighting. Maddened with arrow wounds or the savage stabs given them by their *mahuts*, elephants charged other elephants tearing great wounds in their bodies with tusks soon dripping with blood, or struck at the horses, trampling them and their riders under foot. From their howdahs soldiers fired arrows and hurled spears. The blasts of the trumpets rallying the troops for a fresh charge ; the jingle-jangle of the elephants' bells ; the clash of sword on sword and on helmet or breast-plate ; the groans and cries of the wounded ; the whinnying screams of frightened horses and the roaring of elephants ; the shouts of the fighters and the crash of spiked maces on armour made up a din of battle dreadful to hear. In all directions were

dead and dying men. With thighs crushed with maces, with arms torn off by sword-cut or spear, their bodies cut open or pierced with arrows, the fighters lay in pools of blood, some dying quietly, others cursing the foe with their last breath.

After a while the fiercest of the fighting centred round Bhishma, against whom the Pandava troops made many ugly rushes. Standing

Uttara and  
Cweta, the two  
Matsya princes,  
are killed.

in his silver car beneath the white standard with its silver emblem glittering in the centre, the old man dealt out death with his bow to men and

animals. Round Bhishma, each in his car, were Durmukha, Kritavarman, Kripa, Salya and Vivinsati. Upon them charged Arjuna's son Abhimanyu in a car drawn by four chestnut horses. Wounding Salya and Kritavarman, he killed Bhishma's charioteer and with a broad-headed arrow cut down his standard. Loud were the shouts from the Pandavas when the silver emblem fell, but Bhishma held his own. Then when Abhimanyu, himself wounded, was withdrawing, Uttara the Matsya prince, mounted on a fierce elephant charged the group and engaged Salya. In a minute Salya's four horses had been trampled to death. Keeping his footing on the rocking car, Salya aimed a javelin at Uttara. So sure was the aim and so great the force with which it was hurled that it tore through the armour of the young prince and pierced him in the breast. Uttara fell forward senseless upon the elephant's neck. Leaping from the car, with one blow of his sword Salya cut off the elephant's trunk, the animal falling to the ground dying. Then, mounting on Kritavarman's car, Salya fought on. Seeing Uttara fall, his brother Cweta rode down on Salya. Cutting down the men who stood between him and the grandsire.

of the Kurus, Cweta reached the group, only to be received with a cloud of arrows which most of them struck on his armour. Killing Salya's son Rukmaratha, Cweta cut his way through the struggling mass. Killing horses and riders, he reached the car of Salya. A desperate fight ensued, Cweta being reinforced by many of the stoutest fighters of Virata's army. Hacking down man after man, he forced Salya's car back towards where Bhishma fought on unflinching. With one arrow he wounded Bhishma in the arm, with another he split the bow that he held. The troops of the Kurus charged to the assistance of their aged leader. Seizing another bow larger and stronger than the one split, Bhishma killed with four arrows the four horses of Cweta's car. With the fifth he cut down his standard and with the sixth cut off the head of his charioteer. Leaping from his car spear in hand, Cweta attacked Bhishma, but the spear was struck out of his hand. Then, grasping a mace, he rushed at Bhishma who with a quick movement stepped from the car which in another moment was smashed with the force of the blow. Mounting another car, Bhishma aimed an arrow which, piercing through his mail, reached Cweta's heart. With blood gushing from his mouth and breast, the hero tottered and fell amid the shouts of triumph from the Kaurava warriors. Soon afterwards, at sunset the two armies withdrew to their camps for the night.

During the second day a fight took place between Bhishma and Arjuna, but owing to the skilful manner in which their cars were driven, neither was able to inflict fatal wounds. Drona wounded Dhrishtadyumna and killed his charioteer and horses and split the bow he held. With his charioteer and horses dead and his

The second day  
of the battle.

bow broken. Dhrishtadyumna, mace in hand, leaped to the ground. Before he could approach Drona, the latter had shattered the mace with a heavy arrow. Dhrishtadyumna then picked up a shield and sword and rushed at Drona, but he was driven off and wounded. Bhima now came up to attack Drona who ordered the Kalinga division under the leadership of their Raja Crutayush to drive him off. At the same time Drona was threatened by the two Rajas, Virata and Drupada. The advance of the Kalingas was met by Bhima at the head of the Chedi, Matsya and Karusha troops. A bitter fight ensued and the plain there was soon a shambles strewn with dying and dead, with limbs and heads, and men vomiting blood or with their entrails protruding from stomach wounds. So desperate and close was the hand to hand fighting that in the mêlée mistakes were made and troops cut down men on their own side. The horses of Bhima's car were killed, and the Raja of the Kalingas ordered his driver to charge upon him. The Raja's son, Chakradeva, standing at his father's side in the car, was killed by a mace thrown by Bhima as the car approached. Armed with shield and sword, Bhima, standing on his horseless car, awaited the Raja who threw seven heavy spears which Bhima warded off with his shield. Attacked by the younger Kalinga prince Bhanumat on an elephant, Bhima, leaping on to the animal's back by means of its tusks, with one blow of his sword cut the prince in two. Leaping down again, Bhima, followed by his men, dealt death to scores of Kalingas, cutting the harness and killing the horses of cars and leaping into them and butchering the men.

Rallying his forces for a last effort, Raja Crutayush charged down on Bhima whom he wounded slightly in the breast with an arrow. Seeing Bhima hard pressed,

a charioteer drove his car to him. Mounted in that, Bhima charged upon the Raja and shot him dead with arrows. Next he killed the two royal car men and in the next car the Kalinga princes Satyadeva, Satya and Ketumat. With their leaders dead or dying, the Kalingas fled. The confusion was extreme. Madened with fright or wounds, the Kalinga elephants stampeded, trampling down their miserable soldiers who were hammered to death by Bhima's mace or butchered by the Chedi troops. The rout was complete, the flying regiments being pursued for miles by cavalry and elephants. While the retreat was at its height, Bhishma led a division to the rescue of Crutayush, of whose death he was not aware. But he was met by such a cloud of arrows that, having lost his charioteer, his horses took fright and bolted carrying him off the field. This was the signal of disaster. The Kuru division around Bhishma was scattered by a magnificent charge headed by Arjuna whose arrows, shot with Gandiva, did dreadful execution among the fleeing Kuru soldiers. As the sun set the battle-field was littered with corpses, with smashed cars, dead horses and elephants, broken swords, splintered maces, dented shields and the debris of chiefs' umbrellas, flagstaves, whips, harness, and torn blood-stained garments.

On the third day the chief feature of the struggle was the duel between Arjuna and Bhishma. When the battle began, Arjuna charged

The third day of the battle. down on the Kauravas, leading the chariot divisions who broke through the ranks of the Kaurava infantry, wheeled and charged back again, decimating the enemy's ranks. A second time they charged, till the ground was slippery with blood and so heaped with men and animals

that it was hard for them to manœuvre easily in the quagmire of dead and dying. Cars and men and armour were dyed crimson with the blood which splashed up around the car wheels as they sped on. Around Arjuna were his brothers. By Bhishma's side fought Drona. To their help came Duryodhana who, struck by an arrow shot at him by Bhima, fainted in his car, the driver of which thereupon turned and drove off the field. This was the signal for Duryodhana's division to retreat in disorder. Bhima pursued it, he and his men severely punishing the flying Kauravas. Bhishma and Drona tried in vain to rally the panic-stricken troops. For the time the whole Kuru army gave way. Soon, however, Duryodhana had recovered from his wound; and, re-entering the fight, he rallied the army. When they saw the banner of the crown prince, the troops turned with new spirit to face the Pandavas flushed with their triumph. The pursuit was checked and a desperate hand to hand fight began which lasted for hours. Urged on by Bhishma and Duryodhana, the Kaurava troops fought bravely. Heads, arms and limbs were hacked off; streams of blood flowed around bodies of men, horses and elephants sticking up like rocks in a river bed. Cars stuck and overturned, their occupants leaping on to the sides and continuing the fight from that vantage post. Men cut down squirmed in convulsive writhings on the ground. Some who were beheaded actually stood a moment headless still grasping their swords before falling with a crash into the bloody mire. After a while the desperate courage of the Kauravas told and the Pandava ranks were pushed back and back till the retirement became a flight in spite of the valiant efforts of Yudhishtira and his brothers. But after a time Krishna interfered. Warning Arjuna that the flight was becoming a



danger, he bade him use Gandiva to the full extent of its magical power. Arjuna's car was driven towards Bhishma. When the twang of Gandiva was heard, the Pandava troops took heart and rallying drove the Kurus back. A fierce battle ended in the total rout of the Kauravas who were driven off the field with thousands of their men dead or wounded.

On the fourth day the chief feature of the earlier fighting was Bhima's defeat of a Magadha elephant

The fourth day of the battle. division led by Duryodhana and the Raja of Magadha. Leading his division of the army gallantly, Bhima

routed the elephants, himself killing many with blows of his mace and stampeding the rest. Duryodhana, furious at his rebuff, collected a number of regiments and led them against Bhima. To the rescue of the latter came Satyaki who with a band of horse hacked his way to Bhima's car through the Kuru troops. A desperate encounter resulted first in the wounding of Satyaki. Then the bow of Bhima was shot away and Bhima was wounded by Duryodhana in the breast and swooned for a few moments. Quickly recovering, Bhima sent Salya disabled from the battle and then, as fourteen of the sons of Dhritarashtra rushed on him, he killed eight before the rest broke and fled before this human tiger. Seeing the disaster, Bhishma charged to the aid of the princes, leading fresh regiments of the Kuru army. On Bhishma's right rode Bhagadatta, King of the Prag-yotishhas, on a huge elephant. As he approached, Bhima struck him with an arrow wounding him so that the blood ran down his armour. With a shout of rage Bhagadatta came on and flung a spear at Bhima wounding him and causing him to reel and seat himself for a moment in his car. Seeing his distress, one of the Pandava chiefs

rallied a troop of elephants and charged Bhagadatta's elephant. So mercilessly did the Pandava animals gore the latter that he got out of control and galloped off, taking his wounded master with him. This was the sign for a general retirement of the Kauravas and the battle was over for the day, each side making for their tents. When he reached his, Duryodhana gave way to tears from grief at the death of his eight brothers.

On the fifth day the battle from the first went against the Kauravas. Arjuna, using Gandiva with deadly effect, led the general attack and

The fifth day  
of the battle.

pressed back the disheartened Kurus.

Duryodhana and Bhishma, at the head mostly of Kalinga troops, charged the Pandavas, but all to no purpose. As Arjuna drove down the field slaying all in his way, panic seized many of the Kurus, car fighters leaping from their cars and cavalry dismounting; while infantry ran wildly or held up their hands in sign of surrender. Reinforced by corps of Gopas, Trigartas, Madras and other units led up by Dussasana, Bhishma made a gallant fight of it. Around him fought most of the chiefs. Drupada fought Drona; Yudhishtira was engaged with Salya; the Raja of Avanti fought the ruler of the Kasis. Sahadev struggled with Vikarna, Duryodhana with the Raja of the Matsyas. The elephants on each side did great execution, the vast brutes smashing cars or dragging them hither and thither and pulling the charioteers out of the cars with their trunks and dashing them on the ground, or crushing them to death. It was a day of triumph for Arjuna whose arrows took a fearful toll of life, so that sunset found the Kauravas weary and dispirited and glad to withdraw their troops.

On the sixth day the battle was general. The Pandavas advanced in the *makara* formation, the Kurus in that of a crane. Early in the fight the Srinjayas and Kekaya divisions were put to flight by a charge headed by Bhishma and Drona. In another part of the field Bhima, seeing the sons of Dhritarashtra gathered together, ordered his driver to charge down on them. Shooting arrows as he came, he leapt from the car and mace in hand advanced on them on foot. Several of them were soon rendered senseless by his blows; but the others pressed round him, dealing him blows on helmet and armour. Seeing his danger, Dhrishtadyumna drove to his aid. Bhima had cut a path through the enemy, spreading it with corpses, and deep in the Kuru ranks he stood whirling his mace and defying Duryodhana's brothers. Together Bhima and Dhrishtadyumna put the Kuru princes to flight, killing them and their men in great numbers. But Drona led a rescue party, and Bhima and Dhrishtadyumna were hard pressed for a while till twelve cars led by that of Abhimanyu charged down to their aid with a large body of cavalry. For a time there was a ding-dong struggle. After a while the fight centred round Bhima and Duryodhana who sought each other out and rained arrows on one another. Duryodhana's horses were killed, his umbrella and his bejewelled standard were cut down and he himself was wounded. Half swooning, he mounted the car of Kripa. Round him his brothers rallied. Of them Vikarna was killed. Then Jayatsena was struck down by an arrow fired by Catanika who the next moment almost killed the horses of Dushkarna and then that prince himself, piercing him through the heart. When sunset came, the Pandavas held the field and were driving the foe before them.

On the seventh day the battle was renewed with fury. During the night, after his wounds had been dressed,

The battle continued. Duryodhana had gone to the tent of Bhishma to consult with him as to the chances of success. On the whole, the

fighting had gone in the favour of the Pandavas in spite of the heroism of the Kurus, and Duryodhana had lost heart. Bhishma told him that he and all the chiefs were resolved to do their best, but that the fact was that even the gods could not overcome the Pandavas helped by Krishna. 'Either I will kill the Pandavas or they will kill me' he said. True to his word he fought the next day with the greatest bravery, but it was no use against the arrows of Arjuna. On the eighth day the fight went much against the Kauravas. Bhima killed eight sons of Dhritarashtra, whereupon Duryodhana went to Bhishma and complained. 'See' he said, 'here are my brothers dying, yet you do nothing.' 'Before the banishment of the sons of Pandu' replied Bhishma, 'I gave you the same advice that Drona and Vidura and Queen Gandhari gave. It was mad folly for you to defy your cousins. I tell you that we cannot conquer them. I, Drona, you, none of us will outlive this battle. Make up your mind to that, for assuredly Bhima will kill us all. Still I will fight on.'

In spite of all efforts the fight went against Duryodhana who lost more brothers killed by Bhima and finally the Kaurava army was driven off the field.

During the night another council of war was held by the Kauravas when Bhishma once more urged that, if

The death of Bhishma. they were failing, it was because such was the decree of fate; that it was impossible to conquer, but that they could fight on bravely to the last. The chief feature of the next day's battle was the fight between Bhishma

and Arjuna. The latter hesitated to press the old man too hard. Seeing this, Krishna lost patience and, springing from the car, was making for Bhishma when Arjuna running after him threw his arms round him, begging him to stop and reminding him of his promise to Duryodhana that he would not actually fight. Arjuna promised that he would do his best to kill Bhishma. Reluctantly Krishna returned to the car and the fight went on, but despite Arjuna's efforts by sunset the Pandavas were in retreat.

The next day the battle raged round Bhishma. Upon him the Pandavas charged again and again. Arjuna headed the charges and many chiefs fell around the white and silver standard. Wearied out and without hope of victory, Bhishma at last yielded. Defended to the last by Duryodhana and his brothers, the old man fell from his car fatally wounded. The fall of the Kaurava commander-in-chief was the signal for the Kurus to stop fighting, and the Pandavas gave like orders, a temporary armistice being arranged out of respect for the old hero. Round the dying man chiefs of both armies gathered, and there in the presence of all Bhishma made one last appeal to Duryodhana. 'Listen before it is too late', he said. 'Stop this war. Let my death bring peace. Let half the kingdom be given to the sons of Pandu and let them go back in peace to Indraprastha. Dreadful sorrow has come from this family quarrel; still more bitter sorrow is to come. Listen to me before it is too late.' But Duryodhana would not listen.

Owing to a quarrel with Bhishma Karna had sworn not to fight as long as Bhishma lived. Duryodhana now summoned him and asked him to take command. But Karna said that Drona would be the more proper leader. Drona was therefore appointed by

Drona is made leader. Plot to seize Yudhishtira.

Duryodhana to command in chief. On the first day, confident in their new leader, the Kurus rallied and fought gallantly. Still the progress made was slight and Duryodhana formed a plan for the capture of Yudhishtira. Drona declared that it might be possible to capture Yudhishtira if Arjuna was not near to protect him. Duryodhana's idea was that, if he became a prisoner, the eldest Pandava could be induced once more to settle the family dispute by dice and that, when defeated, he would submit to banishment and that his brothers would obey him and follow him to the woods. Several efforts were therefore made to lure Arjuna away from his brother; but spies had brought news of the plot to Yudhishtira and he was always carefully guarded. Desperate fighting took place between his bodyguard and Drona and his followers who made rush after rush upon the Pandavas, but all to no purpose. Late in the day Drona succeeded in reaching the chariot of Yudhishtira, killing Singhasena, Vyaghradatta the prince of the Panchalas, and other chiefs who guarded their leader. But just as it seemed as if Drona could seize Yudhishtira, Arjuna charged to the rescue and drove off the Kauravas with heavy loss.

At nightfall Drona told Duryodhana that he could not capture Yudhishtira if Arjuna were near. If

The plot fails  
after desperate  
fighting.

Arjuna could be lured away, then and then only it could be done. A plot was therefore formed to challenge Arjuna, and Susarman and his Trigarta chiefs agreed to lure away Arjuna by this means. On the morrow, as soon as the armies were arrayed, Susarman sent his challenge to Arjuna to fight him and his troops drawn up at the southern end of the battlefield. So Arjuna asked Yudhishtira's leave to go. Yudhishtira reminded him of the plot of Drona; but



Arjuna said: 'What can I do? I cannot decline a challenge. These men have sworn to conquer me or die. I must answer their defiance. That is my rule.' So Yudhishtira reluctantly gave him permission and Arjuna drove off towards the Trigartas. No sooner had he gone than a desperate attack was made on Yudhishtira who had promised his brother that, if too hard pressed, he would save himself by flight. Fierce struggles took place around Yudhishtira's car. Many of his supporters fell, including Satyajit, prince of the Panchalas, who was beheaded by an arrow of Drona. Seeing himself almost surrounded, Yudhishtira ordered his charioteer to leave the field. His retreat was covered by his followers who put up a stout fight. Catanika, a brother of the Matsya monarch, was killed and many others before the Kauravas were checked. After going some distance Yudhishtira, whose retreat had been strategic, rallied his men and made another stand, only, however, to be in danger of capture once more and again obliged to give ground. When the danger was greatest, Arjuna returned from his fight with Susarman and the Trigartas. At the sight of him the Kaurava troops gave way and fled. From Gandiva arrows rained on the fugitives. The main body of the Pandava troops now came up under Dhrishtadyumna. Arjuna fought Karna and his brothers, killing three of the latter. Karna, hard pressed, was rescued by Duryodhana, Drona and Jayadratha, Raja of the Sindhus; but at sunset the resistance of the Kauravas was broken and they fled before Arjuna.

On the morrow the Kaurava army deployed in a circular formation like a spider's web. Against this the Pandavas charged again and again but unsuccessfully. At last Yudhishtira sent forward Arjuna's

Death of  
Abhimanyu.

young son Abhimanyu and his company to try his fortune, for he had learned from his father how to attack this particular formation. 'I will lead on the troops close behind you. Only show us the way.' Ordering his charioteer to drive quickly forward, the young prince and his men soon broke their way into the Kaurava ranks. Fighting desperately and followed closely by Yudhishtira, Bhima and the others, Abhimanyu drove off Duryodhana. Then he wounded Dussasana who was carried off the field. Next he engaged Karna and his brother. Karna fled and his brother was killed. Shaken by the impetuosity of the young prince's attack the Kaurava army gave ground. In his eagerness Abhimanyu penetrated too deeply into the enemy's ranks. Before Yudhishtira and the others could follow him, Jayadratha and his Sindhu troops got to his rear and cut him off from his friends. Fighting desperately, the young hero was hemmed in and overwhelmed by numbers. His bow shot away, his sword broken, his car smashed and the horses dead, he stood at bay, mace in hand. Reeling under a heavy blow, his foot slipped. As he was recovering himself, a second blow on the back of the skull dashed out his brains. It was a cowardly blow and even many of the Kauravas felt ashamed when they saw the lad, covered with wounds, lying there beautiful in death. No man had shown more valour than this handsome boy who had never flinched to the last. The tragedy had only taken a few minutes. Just after he fell Yudhishtira and his men broke through to where his body lay comely and peaceful in death.

Meanwhile Arjuna had been fighting in another part of the field. When he returned to learn that his son was dead, and of the treacherous attack made on him, Arjuna swore that he would kill Jayadratha before

another sunset, or that he would kill himself and give his body to the flames. So great was his grief that none except Krishna dared to try to console him. His brothers sat helplessly around him while he moaned 'My son! My son!!' After a time Krishna told all to go and sleep, for there was a heavy day's fighting on the morrow. When he was alone with Arjuna, he comforted him with the tenderness of a woman, saying: 'Do not grieve for your boy. He has died so glorious a death that his name will live for ever. Children are the gifts of God and He can claim them when He wishes.' After a time Arjuna slept; but Krishna watched over him, fearing that if he woke and found himself alone he might give way to despair and rush upon the Kauravas in the night time. Meanwhile a spy had taken news of Arjuna's vow to Jayadratha. Very frightened, he asked leave to retire from the struggle and return to his kingdom. But Duryodhana and Drona assured him that they would protect him from Arjuna's vengeance.

The next morning when the battle began Arjuna sought for Jayadratha. Led by him, the Pandavas charged down on the head of the Kaurava line, where Drona fought fiercely. After bitter fighting Arjuna saw Jayadratha at a distance and drove recklessly towards him, mowing a path through the enemy. Followed by Satyaki and Bhima, he reached the spot where, surrounded by his friends, Jayadratha awaited him. A furious struggle ensued, in the course of which Bhima killed eleven of Dhritarashtra's sons and drove Karna off, three times killing the horses of his car. Satyaki was engaged by a chief named Bhurishrava. Each killed the other's horses. With their cars useless and their bows shot

Arjuna fulfils  
his vow and kills  
Jayadratha.

away, they fought with swords on foot. When swords and shields were smashed, they leapt on each other, wrestling and striking, and trying to strangle each other. Fighting with fists and feet, they struck and kicked each other, intertwining their legs to throw each other down. At last Satyaki fell and his opponent, kicking him in the chest, seized him by the hair and dragged him along the ground till he found a sword. As he was about to cut off his head Arjuna cut off with an arrow Bhurisrava's right arm. Rescued thus, Satyaki sprang to his feet and beheaded Bhurisrava before Krishna and Arjuna could prevent him. But they and all condemned the act of attacking a wounded man as wrong and cowardly.

Then Arjuna made a fresh effort to reach Jayadratha who was constantly surrounded by chiefs determined that Arjuna should not fulfil his vow. Late in the afternoon Arjuna was still struggling to get near him, and Duryodhana sent fresh troops forward to ward off the attack. But just at sunset, after fighting Karna, he reached the Sindhu monarch. A sharp fight ensued. Jayadratha's driver was killed and his standard was cut down. Finally, after a fierce struggle, his head was struck off by an arrow. Then Arjuna and Krishna blew their shells and Bhima gave a great shout of triumph. But the Kauravas were sorrowful and felt that the tide of battle was flowing against them.

So bitter had been the fighting and so ferocious had the combatants become, that, though it was now sunset

The battle continued at night.

and darkness was settling down on the earth, the battle was not stopped as on all the earlier days of the struggle. The two armies fought on and cared not for food or sleep. The carnage was awful, for each man was angry. When it became quite dark, the confusion on

the plain was complete. The soldiers could not see each other but fought wildly hitting out at any one. The emblems on standards and the designs on shields were invisible and it was all but impossible to tell friend from foe. Only battle cries and names called guided the troops as to where they were to hack and hew. The night became terrible beyond all telling. Men fought like fiends, cutting and stabbing at each other as if they were mad. The din was dreadful. The beat of drums and the blasts of the war shells mingled with the curses of struggling men, the groans and screams of the wounded, the whinnying of frightened horses and the grunting of elephants to make night hideous. The air was filled with the dust raised by the cars and animals; under foot it was soon trampled into a quagmire of bloody horror in which neither man or beast could keep their footing. In the darkness Bhima killed many of the Kauravas. He killed ten more sons of Dhritarashtra, the brother of Karna, seven brothers of the cheating Sakuni and five princes of the royal family of Gandhara.

At last, so great was the danger that in the darkness men would kill their own friends, as indeed happened

The battle continued by torch light.

several times, that Duryodhana ordered lamps and torches to be brought. For panic was attacking the troops who did not know whether the enemy was before or behind them. Unable to distinguish friend from foe, the soldiers left their ranks and fled here and there, seeking shelter against the horrors which threatened them from the blackness of that conflict. So lights were brought and on each car were fixed five lamps and three on the howdahs of each elephant, and one on each horse. Then in imitation Yudhishtira ordered his men to get lights. On each car in the Pandava

army were put ten lamps, on each elephant seven and on the horses two. Each soldier also took a torch and fought on with one hand, holding the blazing faggot in the other. Thus illuminated the battle-field became as light almost as at mid-day. The gold and silver armour flashed in the gleaming light of the torches, which was reflected from the shining helmets and burnished cuirasses, from the steel of swords and spears and the gold of necklaces and the jewels and ornaments on the arms and wrists of the Rajas and chiefs. As swords were whirled aloft or descended in murderous blow, the glint of the torch light made them resemble flashes of lightning in the summer sky. Now that each man could see, the fury of the battle was renewed. Men fought with spear and sword and javelin till they broke. Then they used logs of wood as maces or threw stones or the broken wheels and other parts of chariots that lay about on the plain. Waving their torches, men rushed from one group to another. Backwards and forwards the light streamed, as the fighters ran to the places where there was a blaze of light like insects to a flame. Sometimes for a moment there would be a lull in the turmoil, almost silence. Then the hideous din of battle, the groans, the screams, the curses, the clash of steel on steel, broke out again more fiercely than ever.

When midnight came, both armies were wearied with want of sleep. The hours of darkness seemed unending. Men and animals were so

The two armies  
sleep for a while on  
the battle-field.

tired that they could scarcely stand. For six hours they had fought in the dark; all day they had fought in the sun. Flesh and blood could stand no more. On both sides the soldiers began to throw down their arms and lie down where they stood despite the terrors of death



around them. The chiefs and leaders were so sleepy that they could with difficulty keep their foothold on their cars; the horses could scarcely be lashed into motion. Then it was that, seeing the condition of the armies, Arjuna, blowing his conch, shouted out: 'We are all weary from loss of sleep. Let the battle cease for a time that men and animals alike may take rest. Let us all sleep till the moon rises. Then we can fight on.' This plan was approved by the two armies and both men and beasts were soon asleep. Men slept just where they were. The cavalry soldier laid his head on the neck of his horse; the elephant driver slept on the animal's back. The charioteer slept on the floor of his car, and thousands stretched their wearied limbs on the bloodstained earth. In their armour just as they were the tired soldiers slept for an hour or two till the moon rose. Then the battle began again, men refreshed with sleep attacking each other with renewed fury. Duryodhana angrily asked Drona why he had agreed to the armistice, why he had not ordered the Pandavas to be killed as they slept. Drona replied that it was not true that he wished in any way to favour the sons of Pandu; he was fighting as hard as possible for Duryodhana, but he would never consent to unfair tactics. To have tried to have murdered the Pandavas in their sleep would have been the basest of acts. But, even if it had been attempted, he said, it would not have been successful. Then the battle raged on.

Soon the eastern sky was reddened with the dawn. For the moment the battle was stopped and all the warriors stood with joined hands. The death of Drona. raised in prayer to the sun. Soon after the break of day Virata and Drupada were killed by Drona. This was the signal

for a fierce attack on Drona headed by Dhrishtadyumna who swore, when he heard that his father had been killed, that he would not eat or drink till he had killed Drona. But Drona fought bravely and the Kauravas rallied round him, so that it was hard for Dhrishtadyumna to deliver the fatal blow. For a long while the fight was in favour of the Kauravas until false news was brought to Drona that his son Aswatthaman was dead. At that moment while Drona lost heart to fight on, Dhrishtadyumna, putting down his bow and seizing his sword leaped from his car and rushed at Drona. With one blow he cut his head off; and then, in his fury at the memory of his father's death, he waved his bloody sword in the air shouting out in triumph. So quickly had the sword descended that no one had time to stop him. But Arjuna had called: 'Do not strike him, Dhrishtadyumna. The *guru* ought not to be killed.' But the angry man would not listen. Then with the bloody head in his hand, the white locks hanging down to the ears bespattered with blood, he mounted his car and driving after the flying Kauravas, he threw the head at the chariot of Duryodhana, saying: 'Take the head of your leader of whom you were so proud. We will kill all of you like that.' Then the Kauravas broke and ran as a flock of sheep run before wolves. The Pandava soldiers raised a great shout and Bhima took Dhrishtadyumna in his arms and said: 'I will embrace you again when that brute Karna's head is off and that of the wretch Duryodhana.'

As the Kuru army was flying from the field Aswatthaman, like an alligator coming up against the current of a stream, rushed in his car towards the Pandavas. Meeting Duryodhana, he asked why the battle had ended. When he heard that his father was dead he swore a fearful oath to be revenged.

In their camp that night the Kauravas were very sad. In Drona they had lost one in whom they had complete confidence. For five days he had commanded the army and had done great execution among the foe. Now he was dead, Bhishma was dead, Bhima had killed most of the sons of Dhritarashtra, it was the fifteenth day of the war and the Pandavas were as strong as ever. As they lay in their tents Karna, Duryodhana, Dussasana, Sakuni and the other Kaurava chieftains could not sleep. In Duryodhana's tent they met and sat for hours in consultation. Now they realized how bitterly they had provoked the anger and hatred of the Pandavas and that it must be a war to the death in which they would all probably perish. When dawn came, they ordered the army to take the field, having chosen Karna to be their commander-in-chief. All day the battle raged and the slaughter was great; but neither side had gained a decision, when the sun set and the armies returned to their camps. At dawn the next day Duryodhana woke sad at heart. It was the seventeenth day of the war and many of the bravest of the Kauravas were dead. He despaired of victory. He told his fears to Karna. The latter said: 'So far, it is true, the fortunes of war have been on the side of our enemies. But it will not always be so. To-day I will kill Arjuna and his brothers or I will not return from the field.' But Karna made one condition. Arjuna had Krishna as charioteer; he also must have a splendid driver. He named Salya, Raja of the Madras. At first Salya was angry when Duryodhana went to his tent to ask him to be Karna's driver. But after a time he consented and amid the beating of drums and the blasts of the conches he drove Karna's car into battle at the

Karna becomes  
commander-in-  
chief.

head of the Kaurava army. As the car sped over the plain Karna said: 'Salya, drive straight towards the car of Arjuna. Him will I slay first and then Bhima and the other sons of Pandu.'

But, as he drove, Salya mocked Karna for his boastfulness, warning him that he would wish to retreat when he faced Gandiva and Bhima's mace. Karna said nothing but again bade him drive quickly. Then amid the shouts of the Kaurava soldiers and the beating of drums and the clashing of cymbals the car dashed forward towards the Pandavas. But after they had gone a short distance the four horses suddenly stopped of their own accord and had to be whipped before they would go on. Though the sky was clear, thunder was heard and a bone fell from the air on Karna's head, though no one saw who had thrown it or whence it came. When these ill omens happened, Karna said: 'Salya, you do right to warn me of the dangers I must face. Perhaps I am never to return from this battle. But, even if I were sure that such was my fate, I would not wish to retreat. Drive on then till we reach Arjuna and God's will be done.'

Now when Karna charged down on the Pandava army, Arjuna had already become engaged in battle with the Samsaptakas. While he

Karna fights  
Yudhishtira and  
drags him from his  
car.

was killing them in great numbers with Gandiva, Karna reached the centre of the Pandava line where was Yudhishtira surrounded by his chiefs.

Seeing Karna, Yudhishtira called out a challenge to him and a battle began between them at once. At first the struggle went in favour of the Raja who wounded Karna severely in the breast. But after a few moments' swoon Karna rallied and, calling on his men, he pressed Yudhishtira so hard that to protect the latter his

followers had to charge again to drive the Kauravas off. But Karna came close enough to shoot away the Raja's standard and to kill his horses and charioteer. Thus encouraged, the Kauravas made another fierce attack. Fearing that he would be captured, the chiefs around Yudhishtira persuaded him to mount another car drawn by swift horses and retreat. Driving furiously in pursuit, Karna's chariot, steered by Salya, was quicker and overtook the fleeing monarch. Leaning out of his car and seizing Yudhishtira by the neck, Karna had half dragged him out of the car when Salya interfered. Then Karna said mockingly: 'It is well. You are right. I must not kill this Brahman, this student of the Vedas and of sacrificial lore. 'You', he said to Yudhishtira, 'are no true Kshatriya or you would not have turned your back on your enemy and left the field. Go in peace, for it shall never be said that Karna killed such a coward as you.'

Seeing Yudhishtira flying for his life, the soldiers of the Pandava army began to retreat. Karna, believ-

ing that his victory was complete, charged on impetuously slaying many fugitives. But, when Yudhishtira met Bhima, the Pandavas were rallied by that prince who soon forced the victorious Karna to retreat in his turn.

Bhima and Karna fought and Karna was rendered senseless by an arrow and was driven out of the battle for a time. But once more he recovered and led a charge in which he killed Bhima's driver and horses. The Pandavas broke again and fled. But Bhima, bidding Yudhishtira drive off, fought a gallant rear-guard action, holding back Karna and his chiefs and killing several sons of Dhritarashtra.

Yudhishtira was so severely wounded that his

Arjuna draws  
his sword on  
Yudhishtira and  
attempts to kill  
him.

brothers Sahadev and Nakula persuaded him to return to camp to have his wounds dressed. While he was sitting on his bed, having sent the twins back into the battle, Arjuna and Krishna arrived, having heard that he had returned to his tent. Yudhishtira welcomed them with great joy, believing that Arjuna had killed Karna and had come to tell him. When he learned that Arjuna had been engaged in battle at a distance merely with the Samsaptakas, he was very angry and unjustly accused Arjuna of a cowardly wish to avoid a fight with so great a warrior as Karna. In his rage he advised Arjuna to give the bow Gandiva to Krishna and become charioteer. Furious at the injustice of his brother's reproaches, Arjuna drew his sword and would have killed Yudhishtira if Krishna had not stopped him, saying : ' Have you never read the Vedas or heard that any one who attempts the life of his father or elder brother or king will never see Swarga, for God's anger will be kindled against him and a perpetual curse will fall on him ? ' Then, with downcast head in humble tones Arjuna begged his brother's forgiveness for even thinking of raising his hand against him and the two were reconciled.

All this time Bhima, having rallied his men, was fighting a desperate battle with Karna and Duryodhana.

Bhima keeps his  
vow and drinks  
the blood of  
Dussasana.

To their aid came Dussasana who, wheeling round Bhima's car, poured arrows on him, wounding him, killing the horses and then the charioteer.

When Bhima saw his new opponent, his eyes blazed with anger, for it was Dussasana who had dragged Draupadi by her hair into the gaming hall. Recalling the oath that he had sworn before all the Rajas and chiefs that day, he shouted out : ' You have wounded me, you dog ; but you shall wound no one



again. Now, as I swore in the gaming hall, I will drink your blood.' Then, hurling his huge metal mace, he struck Dussasana so terrible a blow that with one groan the prince fell out of his car. Leaping down from his car Bhima, seizing his mace and smashing to match-wood the prince's car, bestrode the dying man. Drawing his sword, he placed his foot on the breast of Dussasana. Then, turning towards Karna, Duryodhana and the other Kaurava chiefs, he shouted: 'Here is Dussasana. Come and save him if you dare.' But no one advanced. Then with his sharp sword cutting open the dying man's breast, Bhima cried, 'See! I keep the vow I swore in the gaming pavilion when this dog insulted Draupadi.' Stooping over his foe, he held his two hands to the gushing wound and drank the blood eagerly. Then with one stroke cutting off the head he threw it away in contempt and drank again of the blood that spouted from the neck, crying: 'Never tasted I wine or any liquor so sweet as this man's blood.' When the Kauravas saw this awful sight, they fled in all directions, crying: 'This is not a man but a *rakshasa*, or he would not drink human blood.'

Meanwhile Arjuna, having once more entered the battle, was driven straight from Yudhishtira's tent towards Karna, learning as he went of Bhima's triumph over Dussasana.

Arjuna kills Karna. Around Karna were grouped the bravest and greatest of the Kauravas. Duryodhana was there, Kritavarman, Sakuni and others. As he approached, Arjuna was wounded by an arrow shot by Karna's son Vrishasena. Enraged at the youth's success, he fired a broad-headed arrow at him, striking off his head. At the sight of his stricken son Karna gave a shout of rage and drove down on Arjuna. The cars, each drawn by teams of splendid swift steeds, circled

round one another while the two men fired arrow after arrow at each other. So fiercely did Arjuna draw the bow Gandiva that the string broke. While he was restringing it, Karna took advantage to pour arrows on him and Arjuna was severely wounded and stunned by the force of the blows. Recovering, Arjuna attacked again and again and forced Karna's car backwards in ever widening semicircles till Krishna had manœuvred Salya on to heavy boggy ground in which it was difficult to drive quickly. In a moment the wheel of Karna's car had stuck deep in the mire. The straining horses pulled in vain : the car was in danger of overturning. Fighting bravely, while Salya urged the horses to fresh efforts, Karna cut away the string of Gandiva five times. But Arjuna still pressed him. Karna then in desperation leaped down to lift the wheel and push it out of the rut. As he did so, he called out : ' Wait a moment till I lift this wheel. You are a true Kshatriya and can never wish to take advantage of any enemy.' Arjuna put his bow aside ; but Krishna called out : ' It is very well for you, Karna, to remember honour and military chivalry when it suits you. Such noble principles did not trouble you when you encouraged the sons of Dhritarashtra to insult Draupadi. You never condemned Duryodhana when he tried to kill Bhima by poison, and you advised him to break his solemn word and not to give the sons of Pandu their kingdom when they had fulfilled their part of the agreement. Where was your chivalry, too, when half a dozen of you did to death the brave young Abhimanyu?' At this last allusion to the treacherous murder of his son, Arjuna, angry past all control, seized his bow again and fired an arrow with a broad crescent-shaped blade which struck Karna on the neck, cutting off his head.

Then in triumph the Pandavas blew their conchs : but the Kauravas, seeing their leader fall, were seized with panic and fled like frightened

Panic among the Kauravas. Duryodhana vainly tries to rally them.

sheep. Duryodhana tried to stop the rout. He bade them remember that not only was flight a disgrace but that fleeing men would be cut down like animals. If they faced the enemy, they had at least a chance of giving as good as they got. But they would not stop to listen. Each man thought Arjuna was after him. In cars, on elephants, on horses and on foot, the troops fled for their lives. So great was the panic that the animals even became infected with it and elephants, maddened with fright at the roars of the rejoicing Pandava soldiers and goaded by the stabs of the mahouts, trampled down cars and soldiers till the rout in places was checked by a barrier of struggling dying men and animals and broken cars. The scene was terrible. Mad with fright the Kauravas drew their swords on each other, bleeding, cursing and fighting for an escape that their own cowardice had for ever denied them. Into this struggling mass the Pandavas shot arrows and hurled spears. With great courage Duryodhana gathered his chiefs and held the foe at bay till the bulk of his army had straggled from the field. Deep was the gloom in the Kaurava camp that night.

Kripa urged Duryodhana to offer to surrender. 'Our greatest men are killed. With Krishna to help him

The last day. The Kauravas are defeated. Duryodhana flies from the battle.

Arjuna is unconquerable. What is the good then to struggle further? To-day is the seventeenth of the war and your men, in spite of your gallant efforts, have fled from the fight in panic. We have no chance of win-

ning. You have done the sons of Pandu many great wrongs, but even now I think that Yudhishtira will grant you peace. He is merciful and even now will share the kingdom with you and spare further slaughter. To fight on is useless ; make terms with the Pandavas.'

'I know, Kripa' replied Duryodhana, 'that your advice is wise and is intended for my good, that you have no selfish motive. You have shown yourself a true friend always and in this struggle you have fought hard for me. But I cannot take your advice. After all the injuries I have done them, how can I ask them to make peace? You saw Bhima drink the blood of my brother. Can I hope for peace with Bhima? None of them will ever forgive. Therefore I am resolved to fight on as long as any will follow me on to the field.'

These brave but despairing words put new life into the remnant of the Kaurava chiefs surrounding Duryodhana. They elected Salya to act as their generalissimo, and Duryodhana said to him: 'This is a time to test true friends. You will lead us to-morrow?' And Salya replied: 'I am ready to carry out your orders. My kingdom, wealth and life also are yours to dispose of. I will command the army; and, if I cannot kill your enemies, I will myself die to-morrow on the plain.' So when the morning came the Kauravas took the field led by Salya. It was the eighteenth day of the battle and the Kaurava army had lost so many of its greatest warriors that it was agreed that no one of the survivors should fight alone with any of the Pandavas but that they should all fight in a body. Then the battle began and raged fiercely for a while till, overpowered by numbers, the Kauravas wavered and broke. Then it was that Salya, seeing Yudhishtira under his royal umbrella, ordered his driver to charge him. A fierce struggle around the

two cars ended in Salya's death from a spear thrown by Yudhishtira. The fall of Salya was the signal for a general advance of the Pandava army. Sweeping forward irresistibly, the Kaurava troops were too panic-stricken to rally and they fled in all directions. It was the end: the Kauravas were finally defeated. Despair filled all hearts and each man fled, throwing his arms down as he ran; each charioteer lashed his horses to escape the swords and arrows of the pursuers. Seeing that all was lost, Duryodhana mounted a swift horse and rode off the field. As he fled, a chance arrow shot the animal. His nerve gone, the miserable prince did not wait to find a fresh horse but fled from the battle on foot, still carrying his mace.

On the edge of the plain of Kurukshetra was a lake, its banks thickly wooded and here and there broken with caves. In one of these deep by

Slaughter of the  
last Kauravas.  
The search for  
Duryodhana.

the water's edge Duryodhana, wearied out, took refuge. His escape was not at first noticed. The battle raged on: the Pandava soldiers pursued the flying enemy in all directions. All the remaining sons of Dhritarashtra were killed by Bhima. Sahadev killed Sakuni and the slaughter continued till at last there were only three chiefs on the Kaurava side surviving, Aswatthaman, Kripa and Kritavarman. In the confusion and dust of the battle they had not at first noticed that Duryodhana was not to be seen. When they discovered this, they said: 'We fight his battles, yet he has gone. What is the good of our giving our lives in vain? Let us go and look for him.' So turning their cars, they drove quickly from the plain.

Now when the standards of these three were seen in retreat, the Pandavas realized that Duryodhana was

missing. Thinking that he might have been wounded, they began to search the battlefield; but after a time, as they could not find him, the trumpets sounded for the withdrawal and the army returned to camp to rest. Straggling parties of soldiers had followed Aswatthaman and his companions off the field, just the miserable remnants of the Kaurava armies. Some of these men told the three that they had seen Duryodhana going towards the lake. So Aswatthaman, Kripa and Kritavarman went in that direction. When they reached the lake, they searched its wooded banks and, thinking he was hiding in one of the caves, called to Duryodhana to come out, telling him that they were the only Kauravas left but that they would gladly fight on if he would lead them. 'I am glad that you live' shouted out Duryodhana from the cave; 'but it is useless to fight on. The gods are on the side of the Pandavas.'

Meanwhile, while he and his brothers rested, Yudhishthira had sent men to search in all directions.

The Pandavas discover Duryodhana.

But they brought no news till a servant of Bhima, going into the woods by the lake edge from the other side to shoot a deer for the supper of the princes, heard the voices and, creeping up, overheard the talk of Duryodhana and his friends. Hastening back, he informed Bhima. At once the Pandavas, seizing their arms, mounted their cars and set off for the lake. When Aswatthaman and the others saw them coming, they ran away and hid in the dense thickets. Coming up to the mouth of the cave, Yudhishthira shouted: 'You have caused the death of many thousands, Duryodhana. It is now shameful cowardice to hide in this way. Come out and fight.'



Let us see to whom God will give the final victory. You, a Kshatriya, cannot refuse a challenge. You ought to be ashamed to care so much for your life, when you have sacrificed those of all your kinsmen and friends.' But Duryodhana would not come out and replied: 'I have not taken refuge here from fear, but because I am wearied out. When I have rested, I will come out and fight.'

Yudhishtira told him to come out and fight for his kingdom. 'My kingdom!' cried Duryodhana, 'my kingdom was my brothers, my kinsmen and friends. Now that they are dead, I have no wish to reign. Take the kingdom and leave me to my fate. I shall wear deer skins and live the life of a holy man in the woods.'

'Such sad talk does not make me feel any sympathy with you, Duryodhana. It was not in this way that you talked when you said that you would not give me an inch of land except by war. Beaten and humiliated, you may now be ready to give me my fair share of the kingdom; but I am not prepared to accept anything from you, even if you could offer me the whole earth. My right shall be established by conquest. You cannot save your life by offering to surrender what you can no longer defend. One of us must die. If both of us live, people will not know what is the result of the war.'

'I have no weapon but my mace', replied Duryodhana. 'If you all attack me at once, I shall die instantly. Swear that you will fight me one by one and each of you on foot and armed only with a mace and I accept your challenge.'

Yudhishtira said that they accepted the terms and he could rely on their good faith. Still Duryodhana would not come out.

Then Bhima went to the mouth of the cave and shouted : ' Do not play the fool with us any longer.

If you do not come out, I will  
Bhima mortally wounds  
Duryodhana. come in and drag you out.' Then Duryodhana came out, mace in hand.

His face was so distorted with anger and he was so haggard and ghastly that he looked like Yama himself. Yudhishtira gave him armour and then offered to fight him. But Krishna said : ' You are no match for him who has practised for years at the mace. Bhima must fight him ; one must use a stone to break a stone.'

So Bhima, mace in hand, stepped out to face Duryodhana. ' Miscreant,' he shouted, ' now I will punish you for all the wrongs you have done us. Think of the house of lac at Varanavata ; think of the insults to Draupadi ; think of the foul tricks of that rogue Sakuni ; think how you tried to poison me. You shall pay to-day for all your sins.'

' I am ready to fight. Save your words and prove your manhood and your skill'; retorted Duryodhana.

Then they ran at each other ; and, striking terrible blows, leaping up, leaping on one side, stooping and fainting, they ran round and round each other. The maces fell with crashing sound on helmet and cuirass and soon blood streamed from the fighters. Several times each struck the other to the ground ; but, so strong were they, that they managed each time to scramble to their feet before a knock-out blow could be dealt. Bhima was far the stronger, but Duryodhana was quicker on his feet and more skilful in the use of the mace. As he glared on his enemy, Bhima remembered his oath in the gaming hall when Duryodhana had insulted Draupadi. He waited for his chance. The two men closed and rained smashing blows on

heads and shoulders. So hard did Duryodhana hit that Bhima was knocked almost senseless and reeled for a moment. Then he sprang forward like a tiger and hit out in all directions. To escape the attack, Duryodhana leaped into the air and Bhima quickly dealt him a smashing blow across the thighs, breaking both bones. With a groan of anguish Duryodhana fell heavily to the ground. Mad with triumphant rage, Bhima danced round him, kicking him in the face and crying: 'In the gaming hall you mocked us crying "Cow, cow" when you insulted Draupadi; and because of our brother's word we could not strike you. We mock you now, you dog'; and he kicked his head again.

But Yudhishtira was very angry and, seizing Bhima, dragged him back. 'Do you wish', he cried, 'to make our

Yudhishtira  
rebukes Bhima.  
Duryodhana's  
dying defiance.

name a reproach for ever, so that men will scorn our memory? Duryodhana is not only a kinsman, he is a fallen foe whom no man of honour strikes.

To touch a king and a kinsman with your foot, to strike a wounded man is disgraceful. Now that the struggle is over, you ought to pity him.' Then, going up to Duryodhana, he said: 'The act of Bhima is wicked, I am ashamed. But your death and all the woes that have come on you are of your own making. We would have lived in peace with you; but you hated us and were avaricious, driving us into the woods in your greed for power. Even when we had fulfilled our promise and lived for thirteen years in poverty you would not give us even the half of the kingdom that was ours by your father's wish. You would give us nothing but you made us fight.'

Even then there was no repentance in the fallen man. Writhing in his pain, he cursed them all and

most of all Krishna who had helped the Pandavas to win. Then Krishna said: 'What use to argue with this shameless man? You are kings now. In battle you have won the kingdom that was yours by right. Rule justly. Protect the poor, help the oppressed and heaven will be your reward.'

Then sounding his conch, Krishna cried out, 'The reign of the noble monarch Yudhishtira has begun'; and all the soldiers waved their swords, spears and helmets, crying: 'Long live Maharaja Yudhishtira!'

Leaving some of his attendants to look after Duryodhana, Yudhishtira and his brothers drove to

Aswatthaman and  
his companions  
mourn over  
Duryodhana.

the Kaurava camp, now quite deserted. When they had gone, Duryodhana painfully struggled into a sitting position and cleaned his face from the blood and dust and

bound up his hair. In his agonies of impotent rage he beat the earth with his clenched fists, tears of rage in his eyes. When they saw the Pandavas drive off, Aswatthaman, Kripa and Kritavarman came out of the woods. At the sight of them the servants left by Yudhishtira ran away in terror. Kneeling down by Duryodhana and seeing his agony, the three Kaurava chieftains wept bitterly and bowed their heads in the dust. Then Aswatthaman said: 'When I see you thus stricken down, my heart is very sore. I have my own father's death to avenge; but even my rage at that is not so great as my grief to see you fallen in the dust. Give me permission to collect troops and lead them against these accursed Pandavas.'

Duryodhana then made Aswatthaman commander of any Kuru forces that could be collected, and the three went back to their cars which they had left on the other side of the wood and drove off to see what could be done.

When they had driven some distance, they stopped to rest under a huge banyan tree that they might talk over their plans. They were tired and hungry and, as they spoke of the chance of renewing the battle, sleep overpowered Kripa and Kritavarman.

Aswatthaman resolves to murder the Pandavas as they sleep in their camp.

But excited by his fierce desire for revenge Aswatthaman could not sleep. He sat in the dark listening to the blood-curdling screams and howls of the jackals, hyaenas and wolves as they tore to pieces the corpses on the battle-field. Presently he saw an owl flying silently towards the tree. He looked up and saw that in the branches many crows roosted, sitting apart from each other. The owl seized one and made off with it. Soon it came back for another as silently. Thus in a short time the bird had killed half a dozen crows without awaking the others. As he watched these gruesome silent murders, Aswatthaman said to himself: 'I can learn from this owl. In open fight what chance have we now against the Pandavas? All our greatest warriors are dead. But if I can creep into their camp and surprise them in their sleep, my revenge will be complete.'

So he woke Kripa and Kritavarman and told them of his plan. But they were shocked and told him that he would be guilty of great sin if he killed sleeping men. Let him wait for the dawn. Then they could rally their troops and perhaps win a victory by honest fighting. But Aswatthaman was too angry to listen. Mounting his car, he drove towards the Pandava camp. Now the five brothers and their attendants were sleeping in the Kaurava camp. They believed that they had nothing to fear, for all their enemies were dead or flying for their lives. Therefore they had left their own camp unguarded. In it were sleeping their five

sons, Dhrishtadyumna and the Panchala and other chiefs with their wives and women servants and many troops. After the victory they had all feasted and made merry and now they were sleeping deeply. The camp was surrounded by a deep moat and there was only one gate. When Aswatthaman arrived before this, he found, as he had expected, no sentry on guard. All was quiet and it was easy for him to steal into the camp. He looked back and saw that Kripa and Kritavarman had followed him. He waited until they came up. Again they tried to persuade him to wait for the dawn and meet the enemy in fair fight. But, when he refused to listen, they promised that they would wait by the gate and prevent any one from escaping.

Then, drawing his sword, Aswatthaman crept through the gate and went first to the tent of Dhrishtadyumna.

Aswatthaman  
murders  
Dhrishtadyumna  
and Draupadi's  
five sons.

The prince of the Panchalas was sleeping on a bed spread with silk sheets. A lamp burned at the foot. Around were stretched servants asleep. Aswatthaman kicked the sleeping man. Dhrishtadyumna woke, half struggled up and then, recognizing his assailant, cried: 'Coward, will you strike an unarmed man?' For answer Aswatthaman seized him by the hair and, dragging him off the bed, strangled and then beheaded him. The sound of Dhrishtadyumna's cry awoke the attendants and the women who rushed in; but Aswatthaman was out of the tent in a second, striking right and left as he ran. In a moment the confusion was immense. Soldiers, seizing their weapons, ran out of their tents. Servants with torches rushed hither and thither. Utter chaos reigned. No one knew who the murderer of Dhrishtadyumna was, and so they fell to fighting on



another in the darkness. Aswatthaman stopped to kill many of the struggling men and then he ran across to the quarters of the Pandavas. Now Draupadi and her five sons had come to the camp in the evening and were sleeping there. Awakened by the noise and the lights the five young princes, seizing their swords, ran out to see what was the matter. Hearing that some unknown man had killed their uncle, they ran out towards his tent. In a moment Aswatthaman was among them and cut the lads down one after the other almost before they could raise their swords. By this time the whole camp was awake. Soldiers, shouting and cursing, were pouring into all the paths and roads in the camp and Aswatthaman saw that he must escape at once. So, cutting off the heads of the five boys, he gathered them into a bunch and carrying them by the hair ran to the gate. When he reached it, he found that all who had tried to escape by it had been cut down by Kripa and Kritavarman.

Silently the three men mounted their cars and drove off across the plain. Their way led across the battle-field. The dawn had not come. Not a streak of grey marked the eastern sky. As the cars were drawn swiftly, they jolted over the awful debris of

The five heads  
are taken to the  
dying Duryodhana.

the fight. Corpses of men and animals, broken cars, wrecked howdahs, armour, weapons, wheels, spear heads, flags, turbans and cloths littered the plain. Disturbed at their foul meals, beasts of prey, snarling or growling, left the corpses they were devouring, while the night air echoed with the wild laugh of the hyena and the screams of packs of jackals. As Aswatthaman and his companions neared the lake, the east lightened for the dawn. They found Duryodhana all but dead. By his side lay his mace. Ringed round him sat

jackals and hyenas, waiting to pounce on the body as soon as life had left it. So quiet lay the prince that one or other bolder than the rest crept up to sniff round his limbs only to dart snarling back as Duryodhana turned or moaned in his pain. Sitting down by him they took his hands and spoke his name. Slowly and painfully the dying man raised his head and gazed at them with dim eyes. Then his senses returned. He recognized them and tried to sit up but he was too weak. 'Shame upon us', said Aswatthaman, 'that we live to see you in this state. But we have not been idle. We have avenged your wrongs. We have this night made rivers of blood to flow in the Pandava camp. See! I have some things here that will make you glad even now'; and he dragged forward the five heads. Weak as he was, Duryodhana's interest was aroused and in a feeble voice he asked what Aswatthaman had brought. 'I have this night killed the five sons of Pandu', said the latter, 'and here are their heads.' The dying man was stirred into new life. With an effort that brought a sweat of agony to his brow he raised himself up, supporting himself on his hands. 'Is it true? is it true?' he gasped out. 'Give them to me, give them. Give me Bhima's head.'

The dawn was coming. The dying man was held up by Kripa and Kritavarman, while Aswatthaman put into his hands the head of Bhima's son. Duryodhana took it and, holding it between his hands, he gazed into its glazed eyes, its bloodstained gaping mouth. The young prince was an exact youthful counterpart of Bhima and in the dim light Duryodhana was for a moment deceived. With a laugh of fiendish joy he squeezed the head till the skull burst. 'What!' he cried, throwing down the head, 'it is not Bhima's; it cannot be Bhima's. His bones would be too strong

for me to break them so easily. There is a mistake. Bring them, let me see the others, quick.'

His strength was failing fast. Aswatthaman dragged the other four heads towards him and held them up close to him. The glazing eyes scrutinized the blood-stained features. Then the hands that had been half raised to seize the bloody prizes fell to his sides. He realized the truth. With a groan he said, 'Aswatthaman, what horrible thing have you done?' In killing these lads with whom I had no quarrel you have ended my race. No one is left to preserve our name.'

Then, sinking back upon the arms of Kripa, he died. Silently for a while the three knelt weeping round the body. Then, as the rising sun reddened the sky, they made ready to go. Soon the news of the night's slaughter would reach the Pandavas and they would start in pursuit. It was no place for them to linger in. So they mounted their cars and drove off, each going in a different direction to avoid capture.

When the news of the death of Duryodhana and all his sons reached Dhritarashtra, the old Maharaja fainted. When he recovered consciousness, he sent for the Queen

The Pandavas  
meet Dhritarashtra  
and are reconciled.

Gandhari and for a long while husband and wife wept together and could not be comforted. But after a time the kind and wise words of Vidura helped them to see that the war had been the will of heaven and that it was foolish to rebel against destiny. Then Dhritarashtra commanded all his daughters-in-law to accompany him and the queen to the battle-field. Now when Yudhishtira heard that the old Maharaja was coming, he went to meet him, he and his brothers, Krishna and Draupadi with the wives of Dhrishtadyumna and many attendants. When he saw the Maharaja a long way off, he

hurried forward to greet him. Around Dhritarashtra were his sons' wives weeping bitterly. Passing through the crowd of women, Yudhishtira reached the litter of the Maharaja and he fell at his uncle's feet and greeted him. Then the four brothers came forward each in turn and embraced the feet of the blind king. It was plain to all that Dhritarashtra was struggling to control his dislike of those who had killed his children. He embraced Yudhishtira and granted him pardon in formal words. Then the others stood around waiting and Dhritarashtra said, 'Where is Bhima?' Now Krishna had foreseen the danger that the old king, burning with hatred against Bhima who had killed Duryodhana and most of his sons, might wish to do him some injury. So he had caused to be brought from the Kaurava camp an image of Bhima dressed in armour which Duryodhana had made, on which he loved to try his strength, dreaming of the day when he could kill his hated cousin. When the old king, therefore, asked for Bhima, Krishna pulled the latter away and put the image in Dhritarashtra's arms. When the blind man felt, as he believed, his nephew in his grasp, he squeezed the image so hard that he crushed it to pieces. Then, his rage overcoming him, he fell down in a fit, the blood oozing from his mouth and his breast which was bruised and bleeding from contact with the steel of the armour on the figure. It was some time before he revived and then, realizing what he thought he had done, he began to cry saying: 'What have I done? The death of Bhima has not brought my own sons to life.'

But Krishna told him the truth and said: 'It is wrong for you thus to give way to hatred. You allowed yourself to be ruled by Duryodhana who was cruel and covetous. All that has happened is your own fault. You could have

prevented the war. If you think of the insults offered to Draupadi in the gaming hall, you will see that Duryodhana was justly slain. These nephews of yours are innocent men who have been cruelly ill-treated.' 'You have done well, Krishna,' the old king said: 'to save me from committing this crime. I yielded to sudden anger. All that has happened is the fault of my sons who were envious and cruel towards my brother's children.' Then, calling for Bhima, he embraced him and then Arjuna and the twins, the tears running down his cheeks as he did so. Afterwards he bade the princes go to the litter of the Queen. Kneeling there, having kissed her feet, they asked Gandhari to forgive them. At first the Queen spoke bitterly, asking why they had not spared one son as a crutch for an old blind couple. But Yudhishtira, speaking gently, pleaded for her forgiveness, reminding her of the wrongs done by her sons and that the war was not the wish of himself and his brothers. So the old Queen relented and took each prince in her arms in turn, blessing them. Then she embraced Draupadi and said: 'Daughter, your sorrow is as mine, for we have each lost all our sons. Yet we must bow to the will of God.' Then she sent them to Kunti who had not seen her children for fourteen years, and when they knelt at her feet the old queen wept over them and wept again when she saw the many wounds that they had received in the battle. Then she embraced and comforted Draupadi.

Then Dhritarashtra ordered them all to go on to the battle-field and to carry out the funeral rites. So the long lines of weeping women walked to the plain of Kurukshetra followed by the litters of the Maharaja and Maharani. When they arrived, they searched on the field for the

The bodies are collected and the funeral rites are performed.

corpses of those they loved and each sat by her husband or son weeping. With their long black hair hanging loose and uncombed over their faces, wringing their hands and beating their breasts, the unhappy widows wandered over the battlefield seeking their dead. And the servants and charioteers, driving off the snarling wolves and jackals and the flocks of vultures and crows, went among the piles of dead to find their masters. Hither and thither, distracted with grief, the poor women ran, and when Gandhari saw the bodies of her sons she wept aloud crying: 'See how these princes rest in the dust with none but jackals for courtiers. They who were fanned by jewelled fans held by lovely women are now fanned by the wings of birds of prey.'

Then Vidura, Sanjaya, Yuyutsu, Dhritarashtra's son by his second wife, and Dhaumya, the family priest of the Pandavas, were commanded by Yudhishtira to make preparations for the burning. Funeral pyres of sandal and scented aloe and other sweet-smelling woods were built for the principal dead and over them were poured fragrant oils and ghee and the bodies wrapped in fine linens were laid on them. The plain was dotted with these piles from which the dark resinous smoke curled in heavy columns into the sunlit sky. Then thousands of loads of faggots drenched in oil were brought and with these was built a huge pyre on which were burned the bodies of the soldiers. When all the bodies had been burned, Yudhishtira and his brothers, Draupadi, Kunti, Gandhari and the widows of Dhritarashtra's sons all bathed in the Ganges and performed the water rites for the dead.

After the funeral rites had been completed, Dhritarashtra, Queen Gandhari and their family



returned to Hastinapura and made ready to receive Yudhishtira for his inauguration as Yuvaraj of the kingdom. When all was prepared,

The triumphant entry of the Pandavas into the city of Hastinapura.

Yudhishtira, mounting a chariot drawn by sixteen white horses, started from his camp on the plain of Kurukshetra for Hastinapura. At

his side stood Bhima as charioteer. Over his head Arjuna held the royal umbrella. On each side of the car walked Nakula and Sahadev, waving fans of Thibet ox tail. Around the car were bands of Brahmans, court poets and minstrels who sang songs in his honour, relating his greatness and the victories that he had won. Behind were ranked in their order all the remaining members of his family and the chiefs and leaders of the army, the soldiers and servants, with thousands of elephants, horses and mules laden with jewels and gold and fine robes. Spears and swords glittered in the sunlight and brightly coloured banners waved gaily, while drums beat and the trumpets sounded the triumph of the sons of Pandu. When the procession came near to the city, the people came out in thousands to greet Yudhishtira whose popularity had grown with the years of his banishment. The people knew how unjustly he had been treated and how wise and good a ruler he had always been. So they cheered and cheered and threw flowers before the feet of the white horses and crowded round his car crying, 'Long live Maharaja Yudhishtira!'. Some of the bolder ones pushed their way through the ranks of the soldiers and tried to garland the king, throwing their chains of flowers into the car when they found they could not reach him. Amid the laughing cheering crowd of subjects the victorious prince came to his father's home. The city was a-flutter with flags

and festooned with flowers, and at the entrance to the palace the crowd was so dense that the horses could scarcely move forward.

Yudhishtira greeted his subjects affectionately, thanking them for their welcome. Then he received the blessings of the Brahmans and, entering the *homa* chamber, he worshipped the family gods with sandal, garlands and jewels. After he had distributed gifts to the Brahmans, he seated himself on the golden throne with his face to the east. Then Dhaumya, the Pandava family priest, performed the solemn rites of inauguration. Rice, white flowers, a clod of earth, gold, silver and jewels were touched by Yudhishtira as symbols of his dominion over the earth. Before him were placed fire, milk, honey, ghee, the sacred shell and the leaves and twigs of sacred trees. Water brought from sacred streams in gold and silver jars was poured over him and Draupadi as they sat on the tiger's skin before the sacrificial fire; and when the coronation was completed the music struck up and bands of heralds blew fanfares on their trumpets and minstrels standing around the throne chanted the praises of Yudhishtira and of the house of Bharata. Thus was Yudhishtira crowned Maharaja of Hastinapura.

At first the Pandavas reigned in happiness and prosperity. All went well with them and their kindness and filial dutifulness to the aged blind Maharaja and Maharani endeared them to the old people. For the time they seemed as fond of them

Dhritarashtra retires to the woods.  
The jungle fire.

as if they had been their own sons. But the war had brought death and desolation to the land. It had destroyed the family and most of the subject princes had been killed. This thought preyed on the mind of Yudhishtira and he became very sad. It was

suggested to him that to arouse himself from his melancholy he should celebrate the greatest of all sacrifices, the *aswamedha*. So the horse was let loose and was followed for a year by Arjuna with a large army. Then with splendid ritual the sacrifice was performed and from all the kingdoms came tribute and Yudhishthira was proclaimed emperor of the world. After this for some years all was peace and contentment; but time could not heal the grief of Dhritarashtra and he could never forgive Bhima for killing Duryodhana. After some years the old man would at times reproach Bhima. On the other hand, Bhima, who was not forgiving as Yudhishthira, hated the memory of his cousins and, when the old man spoke to him reproachfully, he would answer back bitterly. Thus after a time there grew enmity between the two, and Bhima was rude to the Maharaja and disobeyed his wishes whenever he could. At last one day Bhima boasted in the Maharaja's presence that he had killed Duryodhana and his brothers. This so saddened Dhritarashtra that he resolved to go into the woods. So he and Gandhari, taking with them Vidura, Kunti and their servants, went to the forest and lived on the bank of the Ganges.

After some years Yudhishthira and his brothers went out to see the old Maharaja and their aunt and mother. The meeting was a very friendly one; but it was saddened by the death of Vidura which occurred at that time. Soon after the princes had returned to their capital, the news was brought to them of a terrible calamity. A fire had occurred in the jungle. The wind had been high and in an hour the whole forest for miles around was blazing. In this fire perished Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Kunti with all but one or two of their attendants. This dreadful news caused

great sorrow in Hastinapura, and Yudhishtira and his brothers wept for their mother and mourned the fate that had so cruelly overtaken her and their uncle.

After a while terrible portents occurred and the Pandavas felt that something very dreadful was about to occur. Then suddenly news came

The destruction of Dwaraka. The Pandavas retire to the Himalayas and there they die.

that there had been a fearful series of disasters at the Yadava court. A quarrel at a banquet had led to civil war in which the Vrishnis had slaughtered each other. While the dead

were lying unburied in the streets, a terrific cyclone had destroyed the city of Dwaraka. All the houses were blown to pieces and a huge tidal wave, sweeping in from the sea, swallowed up the city and all its inhabitants. Before this final disaster Krishna, broken-hearted over the woes of his people, had retired into the forest where he was shot by a hunter who saw him moving in the brush-wood and thought he was a deer. Before he left Dwaraka, Krishna had sent a messenger to Hastinapura to tell the Pandavas of the fate that had overtaken the city. Yudhishtira sent Arjuna to help the poor people and he brought away the survivors. On his way back to Hastinapura he was met by a sage who told him that the time had come for the Pandavas to leave the earth, that their prosperity was at an end and that, resigning the throne and their wealth, they should retire to die.

When Arjuna reached Hastinapura with the poor people whom he had been able to rescue from the ruined city of Dwaraka, he told his brothers all about the disaster and of Krishna's death and the warning of the *rishi*. Then Yudhishtira resolved to renounce his throne and all his possessions and his brothers all said that, if he went away, they would go with him,

The question arose as to who should be made Maharaja. Now after the death of Prince Abhimanyu his widow Uttarā, daughter of Raja Virata of Matsya, had given birth to a son whom they named Parakshit. So to this lad Yudhishthira gave the throne of Hastinapura, and the government of Indraprastha was given to Yuyutsu, Dhritarashtra's son by his Vaisya wife. Then he spoke to them of their duties as kings and he bade them live always in friendship and peace, never yielding to feelings of jealousy or covetousness. Then the Maharaja, his brothers and Draupadi took off their royal robes and jewels and ornaments and dressed themselves in the manner of *rishis*. Last of all they threw into the Ganges the fires that had burned in the palace shrines and the utensils used at the family sacrifice. Deeply his subjects mourned the departure of the Maharaja, but they knew that he could not be persuaded to change his mind. So they gathered weeping silently in the precincts of the palace and in the roadways, praying for blessings and peace for them on their road to heaven. Then the five brothers with Draupadi, each following after each other, with a dog last, walked out forever from Hastinapura marching towards the East. They went through the country of Banga towards the rising of the sun, and after passing through many lands they reached the Himalayas. As they approached the sacred Mount Meru they dropped down one after another and died from exhaustion and were taken up to Indra's heaven.

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